

BRET HARTE'S DEADWOOD MYSTERY

WITH
OTHER
TALES
SKETCHES
AND
POETRY

BY
F.C. BURNAND
AND OTHERS

*Illustrated by
John Proctor
W G Browne
and others*

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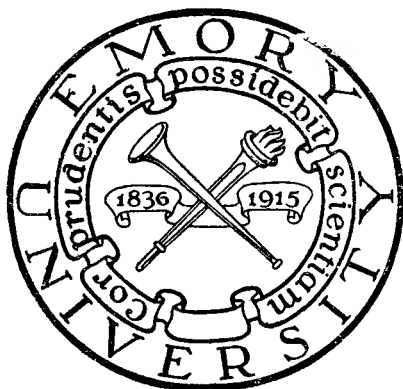
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BY

F. C. BURNAND, J. G. MONTEFIORE, H. S. LEIGH,
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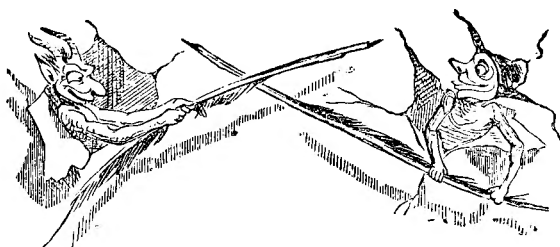
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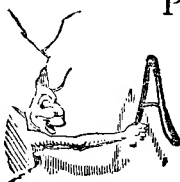
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PREFACE.



PORTION of the contents of the following pages has already been presented to the public in "Beeton's Annual"; but tales by such master-hands are surely worth reproduction.

To these reprints some new and very amusing sketches have been added, and all the original illustrations have been preserved. So those readers who have already perused the former portion will still be interested; and to those who have not, we hope the gratification will be the greater.

March, 1879.

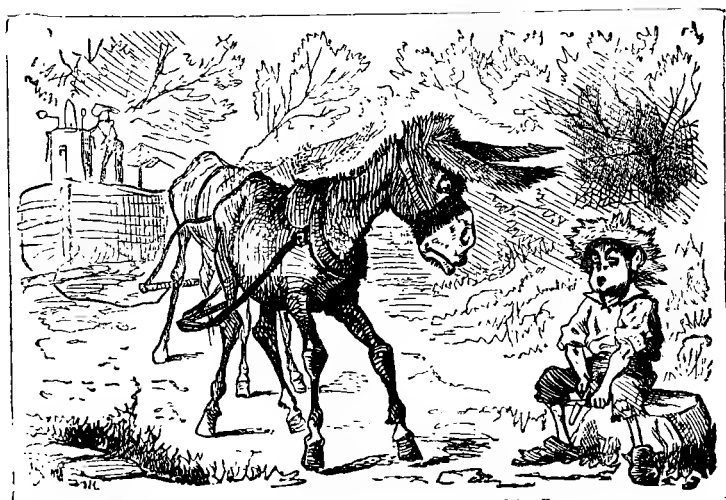




CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE GREAT DEADWOOD MYSTERY. By Bret Harte	9
THE CRUTCH-HANDLED STICK. By F. C. Burnand	46
THE OTHER FELLOW. By J. W. DeForest . . .	71
HALF-WAY. By Henry S. Leigh	105
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S SCREAM. By J. G. Montefiore	107
KNOWARE	123
MY CARTE. By Henry S. Leigh	145
MOSES CLYMER'S BUSINESS	147







The Great Deadwood Mystery.

BY BRET HARTE.

PART I.

IT was growing quite dark in the telegraph office at Cottonwood, Tuolumne Co., California. The office, a box-like enclosure, was separated from the public room of the Miners' Hotel by a thin partition, and the operator, who was also News and Express Agent at Cottonwood, had closed his window, and was lounging by his news-stand preparatory to going home. Accustomed as he was to long intervals of idleness, he was fast becoming bored.

The tread of mud-muffled boots on the verandah, and the entrance of two men, offered a momentary excitement. He recognized in the strangers two prominent citizens of Cottonwood; and their manner bespoke business. One of them proceeded to the desk, wrote a despatch, and handed it to the other, interrogatively.

"That's about the way the thing p'int's," responded his companion.

"I reckoned it only squar to use his dientikal words:"

"That's so."

The first speaker turned to the operator with the despatch.

"How soon can you shove her through?"

The operator glanced professionally over the address and the length of the despatch.

"Now," he answered, promptly:

"And she gets there—?"

"To-night; but there's no delivery until to-morrow."

"Shove her through to-night, and say there's an extra twenty left here for delivery."

The operator, accustomed to all kinds of extravagant outlay for expedition, replied that he would lay this proposition, with the despatch, before the San Francisco office. He then took it and read it—and re-read it. He preserved the usual professional apathy—had doubtless sent many more enigmatical and mysterious messages—but, nevertheless, when he finished, he raised his eyes inquiringly to his customer. That gentleman, who enjoyed a reputation for equal spontaneity of temper and revolver, met his gaze a little impatiently. The operator had recourse to a trick. Under the pretence of misunderstanding the message, he obliged the sender to repeat it aloud for the sake of accuracy, and even suggested a few verbal alterations, ostensibly to ensure correctness, but really to extract further information. Nevertheless, the man doggedly persisted in a literal transcript of his message. The operator went to his instrument hesitatingly.

"I suppose," he added, half-questioningly, "there

ain't no chance of a mistake. This address is Right-body that rich old Bostonian that everybody knows. There ain't but one?"

"That's the address," responded the first speaker, coolly.

"Didn't know the old chap had investments out here," suggested the operator, lingering at his instrument.

"No more did I," was the insufficient reply.

For some few moments nothing was heard but the click of the instrument, as the operator worked the key with the usual appearance of imparting confidence to a somewhat reluctant hearer who preferred to talk himself. The two men stood by, watching his motions with the usual awe of the unprofessional. When he had finished, they laid before him two gold pieces. As the operator took them up, he could not help saying,

"The old man went off kinder sudden, didn't he? Had no time to write?"

"Not sudden for that kind o' man," was the exasperating reply.

But the speaker was not to be disconcerted. "If there is an answer—."

"There ain't any," replied the first speaker, quietly.

"Why?"

"Because the man ez sent the message is dead."

"But it's signed by you two."

"On'y ez witnesses—eh?" appealed the first speaker to his comrade.

"On'y ez witnesses," responded the other.

The operator shrugged his shoulders. The business concluded, the first speaker slightly relaxed. He nodded

to the operator, and turned to the bar-room with a pleasing social impulse. When their glasses were set down empty, the first speaker, with a cheerful condemnation of the hard times and the weather, apparently dismissed all previous proceedings from his mind, and lounged out with his companion. At the corner of the street they stopped.

"Well, that job's done," said the first speaker, by way of relieving the slight social embarrassment of parting.

"Thet's so," responded his companion, and shook his hand.

They parted. A gust of wind swept through the pines, and struck a faint *Æolian* cry from the wires above their heads, and the rain and the darkness again slowly settled upon Cottonwood.

The message lagged a little at San Francisco, laid over half-an-hour at Chicago, and fought longitude the whole way, so that it was past midnight when the "all night" operator took it from the wires at Boston. But it was freighted with a mandate from the San Francisco office, and a messenger was procured, who sped with it through dark snow-bound streets, between the high walls of close-shuttered rayless houses to a certain formal square, ghostly with snow-covered statues. Here he ascended the broad steps of a reserved and solid-looking mansion, and pulled a bronze bell knob that, somewhere within those chaste recesses, after an apparent reflective pause, coldly communicated the fact that a stranger was waiting without—as he ought. Despite the lateness of the hour, there was a slight glow from the windows, clearly not enough to warm the messenger with indications of a festivity within, but yet bespeaking, as it were, some pro-

longed though subdued excitement. The sober servant, who took the despatch and receipted for it as gravely as if witnessing a last will and testament, respectfully paused before the entrance of the drawing-room. The sound of measured and rhetorical speech, through which the occasional catarrhal cough of the New England coast struggled, as the only effort of nature not wholly repressed, came from its heavily-curtained recesses ; for the occasion of the evening had been the reception and entertainment of various distinguished persons, and, as had been epigrammatically expressed by one of the guests, "the history of the country" was taking its leave in phrases more or less memorable and characteristic. Some of these valedictory axioms were clever, some witty, a few profound, but always left as a genteel contribution to the entertainer. Some had been already prepared, and, like a card, had served and identified the guest at other mansions.

The last guest departed, the last carriage rolled away, when the servant ventured to indicate the existence of the despatch to his master, who was standing on the hearth-rug in an attitude of wearied self-righteousness. He took it, opened it, read it, re-read it, and said :

"There must be some mistake ! It is not for me, call the boy, Waters."

Waters, who was perfectly aware that the boy had left, nevertheless obediently walked towards the hall door, but was recalled by his master.

"No matter—at present !"

"It's nothing serious, William ?" asked Mrs. Right-body, with languid wifely concern.

"No, nothing. Is there a light in my study ?"

"Yes. But before you go—can you give me a moment or two?"

Mr. Rightbody turned a little impatiently towards his wife. She had thrown herself, languidly, on the sofa, her hair was slightly disarranged, and part of a slippered foot was visible. She might have been a finely-formed woman, but even her careless *déshabille* left the general impression that she was severely flannelled throughout, and that any ostentation of womanly charm was under vigorous sanitary surveillance.

"Mrs. Marvin told me to-night that her son made no secret of his serious attachment for our Alice, and that if I was satisfied, Mr. Marvin would be glad to confer with you at once."

The information did not seem to absorb Mr. Rightbody's wandering attention, but rather increased his impatience. He said, hastily, that he would speak of that to-morrow; and, partly by way of reprisal, and partly to dismiss the subject, added—

"Positively, James must pay some attention to the register and the thermometer. It was over 70° to-night, and the ventilating draught was closed in the drawing-room."

"That was because Professor Ammon sat near it, and the old gentleman's tonsils are so sensitive."

"He ought to know from Dr. Dyer Doit that systematic and regular exposure to draughts stimulates the mucous membrane, while fixed air, over 60° invariably—"

"I am afraid, William," interrupted Mrs. Rightbody, with feminine adroitness, adopting her husband's topic with a view of thereby directing him from it, "I'm afraid

that people do not yet appreciate the substitution of *bouillon* for punch and ices. I observed that Mr. Spondee declined it, and I fancied looked disappointed. The fibrine and wheat in liqueur-glasses passed quite unnoticed too."

"And yet each half-drachm contained the half-digested substance of a pound of beef. I'm surprised at Spondee," continued Mr. Rightbody, aggrievedly. "Exhausting his brain and nerve-force by the highest creative efforts of the Muse, he prefers perfumed and diluted alcohol flavoured with carbonic acid gas. Even Mrs. Faringway admitted to me that the sudden lowering of the temperature of the stomach by the introduction of ice—"

"Yes, but she took a lemon ice at the last Dorothea Reception, and asked me if I had observed that the lower animals refused their food at a temperature over 60°."

Mr. Rightbody again moved impatiently towards the door. Mrs. Rightbody eyed him curiously.

"You will not write, I hope? Dr. Keppler told me to-night that your cerebral symptoms interdicted any prolonged mental strain."

"I must consult a few papers," responded Mr. Rightbody, curtly, as he entered his library.

It was a richly furnished apartment, morbidly severe in its decorations, which were symptomatic of a gloomy dyspepsia of art, then quite prevalent. A few curious, very ugly, but providentially equally rare, were scattered about; there were various bronzes, marbles, and casts, all requiring explanation, and so fulfilling their purpose of promoting conversation and exhibiting the erudition of

their owner. There were *souvenirs* of travel with a history, old *bric-a-brac* with a pedigree, but little or nothing that challenged attention for itself alone. In all cases the superiority of the owner to his possessions was admitted. As a natural result nobody ever lingered there, the servants avoided the room, and no child was ever known to play in it.

Mr. Rightbody turned up the gas, and from a cabinet of drawers, precisely labelled, drew a package of letters. These he carefully examined. All were discoloured, and made dignified by age; but some, in their original freshness, must have appeared trifling and inconsistent with any correspondent of Mr. Rightbody. Nevertheless, that gentleman spent some moments in carefully perusing them, occasionally referring to the telegram in his hand. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Mr. Rightbody started, made a half-unconscious movement to return the letters to the drawer, turned the telegram face downwards, and then, somewhat harshly, stammered—

“Eh? Who’s there? Come in!”

“I beg your pardon, papa,” said a very pretty girl, entering, without, however, the slightest trace of apology or awe in her manner, and taking a chair with the self-possession and familiarity of an *habitué* of the room; “but I knew it was not your habit to write late, so I supposed you were not busy. I am on my way to bed.”

She was so very pretty, and withal so utterly unconscious of it, or perhaps so consciously superior to it, that one was provoked into a more critical examination of her face. But this only resulted in a reiteration of her beauty, and, perhaps, the added facts that her dark eyes were

very womanly, her rich complexion eloquent, and her chiselled lips full enough to be passionate or capricious, notwithstanding that their general effect suggested neither caprice, womanly weakness, nor passion.

With the instinct of an embarrassed man, Mr. Rightbody touched the topic he would have preferred to avoid.

"I suppose we must talk over to-morrow," he hesitated, "this matter of yours and Mr. Marvin's? Mrs. Marvin has formally spoken to your mother."

Miss Alice lifted her bright eyes intelligently, but not joyfully, and the colour of action rather than embarrassment—rose to her round cheeks.

"Yes, *he* said she would," she answered simply.

"At present," continued Mr. Rightbody, still awkwardly, "I see no objection to the proposed arrangement."

Miss Alice opened her round eyes at this. "Why, papa, I thought it had been all settled long ago. Mamma knew it, you knew it. Last July, mamma and you talked it over."

"Yes, yes," returned her father, fumbling his papers; "that is—well, we will talk of it to-morrow." In fact, Mr. Rightbody *had* intended to give the affair a proper attitude of seriousness and solemnity by due precision of speech, and some apposite reflections when he should impart the news to his daughter, but felt himself unable to do it now. "I am glad, Alice," he said at last, "that you have quite forgotten your previous whims and fancies. You see *we* are right."

"Oh, I dare say, papa, if I'm to be married at all, that Mr. Marvin is in every way suitable."

Mr. Rightbody looked at his daughter narrowly.

There was not the slightest impatience nor bitterness in her manner ; it was as well regulated as the sentiment she expressed.

" Mr. Marvin is—" he began.

" I know what Mr. Marvin *is*," interrupted Miss Alice, " and he has promised me that I shall be allowed to go on with my studies the same as before. I shall graduate with my class, and if I prefer to practise my profession, I can do so in two years after our marriage."

" In two years?" queried Mr. Rightbody, curiously.

" Yes. You see, in case we should have a child, that would give me time enough to wean it."

Mr. Rightbody looked at this flesh of his flesh, pretty and palpable flesh as it was ; but being confronted as equally with the brain of his brain, all he could do was to say, meekly,

" Yes, certainly. We will see about all that to-morrow."

Miss Alice rose. Something in the free, unfettered swing of her arms, as she rested them, lightly, after a half yawn, on her lithe hips, suggested his next speech, although still *distract* and impatient.

" You continue your exercise with the Health Lift yet, I see."

" Yes, papa, but I had to give up the flannels. I don't see how mamma could wear them. But my dresses are high-necked, and by bathing I toughen my skin. Sec," she added, as, with a child-like unconsciousness, she unfastened two or three buttons of her gown, and exposed the white surface of her throat and neck to her father, " I can defy a chill."

Mr. Rightbody, with something akin to a genuine playful, paternal laugh, leaned forward and kissed her forehead.

"It's getting late, Ally," he said, parentally, but not dictatorially. "Go to bed."

"I took a nap of three hours this afternoon," said Miss Alice, with a dazzling smile, "to anticipate this dissipation. Good night, papa. To-morrow, then."

"To-morrow," repeated Mr. Rightbody, with his eyes still fixed upon the girl, vaguely. "Good night."

Miss Alice tripped from the room, possibly a trifle the more light-heartedly that she had parted from her father in one of his rare moments of illogical human weakness. And perhaps it was well for the poor girl that she kept this single remembrance of him, when, I fear, in after years, his methods, his reasoning, and indeed all he had tried to impress upon her childhood, had faded from her memory.

For, when she had left, Mr. Rightbody fell again to the examination of his old letters. This was quite absorbing; so much so that he did not notice the footsteps of Mrs. Rightbody on the staircase as she passed to her chamber, nor that she had paused on the landing to look through the glass half-door on her husband, as he sat there with the letters beside him and the telegram opened before him. Had she waited a moment later, she would have seen him rise and walk to the sofa with a disturbed air and a slight confusion, so that on reaching it he seemed to hesitate to lie down, although pale and evidently faint. Had she still waited, she would have seen him rise again with an agonized effort, stagger to the table, fumblingly

refold and replace the papers in the cabinet, and lock it; and, although now but half-conscious hold the telegram over the gas-flame till it was consumed. For had she waited until this moment, she would have flown unhesitatingly to his aid, as, this act completed, he staggered again, reached his hand toward the bell, but vainly, and then fell prone upon the sofa.

But alas, no providential nor accidental hand was raised to save him, or anticipate the progress of this story. And when, half-an-hour later, Mrs. Rightbody, a little alarmed and more indignant at his violation of the Doctor's rules, appeared upon the threshold, Mr. Rightbody lay upon the sofa, dead !

With bustle, with thronging feet, with the irruption of strangers, and a hurrying to and fro, but, more than all, with an impulse and emotion unknown to the mansion when its owner was in life, Mrs. Rightbody strove to call back the vanished life ; but in vain. The highest medical intelligence, called from its bed at this strange hour, saw only the demonstration of its theories, made a year before. Mr. Rightbody was dead—without doubt—without mystery—even as a correct man should die ; logically, and endorsed by the highest medical authority.

But even in the confusion, Mrs. Rightbody managed to speed a messenger to the telegraph office for a copy of the despatch received by Mr. Rightbody, but now missing.

In the solitude of her own room, and without a confidant, she read these words :

“ Copy.

“ To Mr. Adams Rightbody, Boston, Mass.

“ Joshua Silsbee died suddenly this morning. His

last request was that you should remember your sacred compact with him of thirty years ago.

(Signed) "SEVENTY-FOUR.

"SEVENTY-FIVE."

In the darkened home, and amid the formal condolences of their friends, who had called to gaze upon the scarcely cold features of their late associate, Mrs. Rightbody managed to send another despatch. It was addressed to "Seventy-Four and Seventy-Five," Cottonwood. In a few hours she received the following enigmatical response :

"A horse thief, named Josh Silsbee, was lynched yesterday morning by the Vigilantes at Deadwood."

PART II.

THE spring of 1874 was retarded in the Californian Sierras. So much so, that certain Eastern tourists who had early ventured into the Yo Semite Valley, found themselves, one May morning, snow-bound against the tempestuous shoulders of *El Capitan*. So furious was the onset of the wind at the Upper Merced Cañon, that even so respectable a lady as Mrs. Rightbody was fain to cling to the neck of her guide to keep her seat in the saddle ; while Miss Alice, scorning all masculine assistance, was hurled, a lovely chaos, against the snowy wall of the chasm. Mrs. Rightbody screamed ; Miss Alice raged under her breath, but scrambled to her feet again in silence.

"I told you so," said Mrs. Rightbody, in an indignant whisper as her daughter again ranged beside her,—*"I warned you especially, Alice—that—that—"*

"What?" interrupted Miss Alice, curtly.

"That you would need your chemiloons and high boots," said Mrs. Rightbody, in a regretful undertone, slightly increasing her distance from the guides.

Miss Alice shrugged her pretty shoulders scornfully, but ignored her mother's implication.

"You were particularly warned against going into the Valley at this season," she only replied, grimly.

Mrs. Rightbody raised her eyes, impatiently.

"You know how anxious I was to discover your poor father's strange correspondent, Alice; you have no consideration."

"But when you *have* discovered him—what then?" queried Miss Alice.

"What then?"

"Yes. My belief is that you will find the telegram only a mere business cypher. And all this quest mere nonsense."

"Alice! why, *you* yourself thought your father's conduct that night, very strange. Have you forgotten?"

The young lady had *not*, but for some far-reaching feminine reason, chose to ignore it at that moment, when her late tumble in the snow was still fresh in her mind.

"And this woman—whoever she may be," continued Mrs. Rightbody.

"How do you know there's a woman in the case?" interrupted Miss Alice, wickedly, I fear.

"How do—I—know—there's a woman?" slowly ejacu-

lated Mrs. Rightbody, floundering in the snow and the unexpected possibility of such a ridiculous question. But here her guide flew to her assistance, and estopped further speech. And, indeed, a grave problem was before them.

The road that led to their single place of refuge—a cabin, half hotel, half trading-post, scarce a mile away—skirted the base of the rocky dome, and passed perilously near the precipitous wall of the valley. There was a rapid descent of a hundred yards or more to this terrace-like passage, and the guides paused for a moment of consultation, coolly oblivious alike to the terrified questioning of Mrs. Rightbody or the half-insolent independence of the daughter. The elder guide was russet-bearded, stout, and humorous; the younger was dark-bearded, slight, and serious.

“Ef you kin git young Bunker Hill to let you tote her on your shoulders, I’ll git the Madam to hang on to me,” came to Mrs. Rightbody’s horrified ears as the expression of her particular companion.

“Freeze to the old gal, and don’t reckon on me if the daughter starts in to play it alone,” was the enigmatical response of the younger guide.

Miss Alice overheard both propositions; and before the two men returned to their side, that high-spirited young lady had urged her horse down the declivity.

Alas, at this moment a gust of whirling snow swept down upon her. There was a flounder, a mis-step, a fatal strain on the wrong rein, a fall, a few plucky but unavailing struggles, and both horse and rider slid ignominiously down toward the rocky shelf. Mrs. Rightbody screamed. Miss Alice, from a confused *debris* of snow and ice, up-

lifted a vexed and colouring face to the younger guide—a little the more angrily, perhaps, that she saw a shade of impatience on his face.

“Don’t move, but tie one end of the ‘lass’ under your arms, and throw me the other,” he said quietly.

“What do you mean by ‘lass’—the lasso?” asked Miss Alice, disgustedly.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Then why don’t you say so?”

“Oh, Alice!” reproachfully interpolated Mrs. Rightbody, encircled by the elder guide’s stalwart arm.

Miss Alice deigned no reply, but drew the loop of the lasso over her shoulders, and let it drop to her round waist. Then she essayed to throw the other end to her guide. Dismal failure! The first fling nearly knocked her off the ledge, the second went all wild against the rocky wall, the third caught in a thorn bush, twenty feet below her companion’s feet. Miss Alice’s arm sunk helplessly to her side, at which signal of unqualified surrender, the younger guide threw himself half-way down the slope, worked his way to the thorn bush, hung for a moment perilously over the parapet, secured the lasso, and then began to pull away at his lovely burden. Miss Alice was no dead weight, however, but steadily half-scrambled on her hands and knees to within a foot or two of her rescuer. At this too familiar proximity, she stood up, and leaned a little stiffly against the line, causing the guide to give an extra pull, which had the lamentable effect of landing her almost in his arms. As it was, her intelligent forehead struck his nose sharply, and, I regret to add, treating of a romantic situation, caused that somewhat prominent sign

and token of a hero to bleed freely. Miss Alice instantly clapped a handful of snow over his nostrils.

"Now elevate your right arm," she said, commandingly.

He did as he was bidden—but sulkily.

"That compresses the artery."

No man, with a pretty woman's hand and a handful of snow over his mouth and nose, could effectively utter a heroic sentence, nor with his arm elevated stiffly over his head assume a heroic attitude. But when his mouth was free again he said, half-sulkily, half-apologetically,

"I might have known a girl couldn't throw worth a cent."

"Why?" demanded Miss Alice, sharply.

"Because—why—because—you see—they haven't got the experience," he stammered feebly.

"Nonsense, they haven't the *clavicle*—that's all! It's because I'm a woman, and smaller in the collar-bone, that I haven't the play of the fore-arm which you have. See!" She squared her shoulders slightly, and turned the blaze of her dark eyes full on his. "Experience, indeed! A girl can learn anything a boy can."

Apprehension took the place of ill-humour in her hearer. He turned his eyes hastily away, and glanced above him. The elder guide had gone forward to catch Miss Alice's horse, which, relieved of his rider, was floundering toward the trail. Mrs. Rightbody was nowhere to be seen. And these two were still twenty feet below the trail!

There was an awkward pause.

"Shall I pull you up the same way?" he queried. Miss

Alice looked at his nose, and hesitated. "Or will you take my hand?" he added, in surly impatience. To his surprise, Miss Alice took his hand, and they began the ascent together.

But the way was difficult and dangerous. Once or twice her feet slipped on the smoothly-worn rock beneath, and she confessed to an inward thankfulness when her uncertain feminine hand-grip was exchanged for his strong arm around her waist. Not that he was ungentle, but Miss Alice angrily felt that he had once or twice exercised his superior masculine functions in a rough way; and yet the next moment she would have probably rejected the idea that she had even noticed it. There was no doubt, however, that he *was* a little surly.

A fierce scramble finally brought them back in safety to the trail; but in the action Miss Alice's shoulder, striking a projecting boulder, wrung from her a feminine cry of pain, her first sign of womanly weakness. The guide stopped instantly.

"I am afraid I hurt you?"

She raised her brown lashes, a trifle moist from suffering, looked in his eyes, and dropped her own. Why, she could not tell. And yet he had certainly a kind face, despite its seriousness; and a fine face, albeit unshorn and weather-beaten. Her own eyes had never been so near to any man's before, save her lover's; and yet she had never seen so much in even his. She slipped her hand away, not with any reference to him, but rather to ponder over this singular experience, and somehow felt uncomfortable thereat.

Nor was he less so. It was but a few days ago that



"He strode moodily ahead."—Page 28.

he had accepted the charge of this young woman from the elder guide, who was the recognized escort of the Rightbody party, having been a former correspondent of her father's. He had been hired like any other guide, but had undertaken the task with that chivalrous enthusiasm which the average Californian always extends to the sex so rare to him. But the illusion had passed, and he had dropped into a sulky practical sense of his situation, perhaps fraught with less danger to himself. Only when appealed to by his manhood or her weakness, he had forgotten his wounded vanity.

He strode moodily ahead, dutifully breaking the path for her in the direction of the distant cañon, where Mrs. Rightbody and her friend awaited them. Miss Alice was first to speak. In this trackless, uncharted *terra incognita* of the passions, it is always the woman who steps out to lead the way.

"You know this place very well. I suppose you have lived here long?"

"Yes."

"You were not born here—no?"

A long pause.

"I observe they call you 'Stanislaus Joe.' Of course that is not your real name?" (Mem. Miss Alice had never called him *anything*, usually prefacing any request with a languid, "O-er-er, please, mister-er-a!" explicit enough for his station.

"No."

Miss Alice (trotting after him, and bawling in his ear),
"What name did you say?"

The man (doggedly), "I don't know."

Nevertheless, when they reached the cabin, after an half-hour's buffeting with the storm, Miss Alice applied herself to her mother's escort, Mr. Ryder.

"What's the name of the man who takes care of my horse?"

"Stanislaus Joe," responded Mr. Ryder.

"Is that all?"

"No; sometimes he's called Joe Stanislaus."

Miss Alice (satirically), "I suppose it's the custom here to send young ladies out with gentlemen who hide their names under an *alias*?"

Mr. Ryder (greatly perplexed), "Why, dear me, Miss Alice, you allers 'peared to me as a gal as was able to take keer—"

Miss Alice (interrupting with a wounded dove-like timidity), "Oh, never mind, please!"

The cabin offered but scanty accommodation to the tourists, which fact, when indignantly presented by Mrs. Rightbody, was explained by the good-humoured Ryder from the circumstance that the usual hotel was only a slight affair of boards, cloth, and paper, put up during the season and partly dismantled in the fall. "You couldn't be kept warm enough there," he added. Nevertheless Miss Alice noticed that both Mr. Ryder and Stanislaus Joe retired there with their pipes, after having prepared the ladies' supper with the assistance of an Indian woman, who apparently emerged from the earth at the coming of the party, and disappeared as mysteriously.

The stars came out brightly before they slept, and the next morning a clear unwinking sun beamed with almost summer power through the shutterless window of their

cabin, and ironically disclosed the details of its rude interior. Two or three mangy, half-eaten buffalo robes, a bear-skin, some suspicious-looking blankets, rifles and saddles, deal tables and barrels made up its scant inventory. A strip of faded calico hung before a recess near the chimney, but so blackened by smoke and age that even feminine curiosity respected its secret. Mrs. Rightbody was in high spirits, and informed her daughter that she was at last on the track of her husband's unknown correspondent. "Seventy-four and Seventy-five" represent two members of the Vigilance Committee, my dear, and Mr. Ryder will assist me to find them."

"Mr. Ryder!" ejaculated Miss Alice, in scornful astonishment.

"Alice," said Mrs. Rightbody, with a suspicious assumption of sudden defence, "you injure yourself—you injure me by this exclusive attitude. Mr. Ryder is a friend of your father's, an exceedingly well-informed gentleman. I have not, of course, imparted to him the extent of my suspicions. But he can help me to what I must and will know. You might treat him a little more civilly—or, at least, a little better than you do his servant, your guide. Mr. Ryder is a gentleman, and not a paid courier."

Miss Alice was suddenly attentive. When she spoke again she asked, "Why do you not find something about this Silsbee—who died—or was hung—or something of that kind?"

"Child," said Mrs. Rightbody, "don't you see, there was no Silsbee, or if there was, he was simply the confidant of that—woman!"

A knock at the door, announcing the presence of Mr. Ryder and Stanislaus Joe with the horses, checked Mrs. Rightbody's speech. As the animals were being packed, Mrs. Rightbody for a moment withdrew in confidential conversation with Mr. Ryder, and, to the young lady's still greater annoyance, left her alone with Stanislaus Joe. Miss Alice was not in good temper, but she felt it necessary to say something.

"I hope the hotel offers better quarters for travellers than this in summer," she began.

"It does."

"Then this does not belong to it?"

"No, ma'am."

"Who lives here, then?"

"I do."

"I beg your pardon," stammered Miss Alice, "I thought you lived where we hired—where we met you—in—in—you must excuse me."

"I'm not a regular guide, but as times were hard, and I was out of grub, I took the job."

"Out of grub"! "job!" And *she* was the "job." What would Henry Marvin say? it would nearly kill him. She began herself to feel a little frightened, and walked towards the door.

"One moment, miss!"

The young girl hesitated. The man's tone was surly, and yet indicated a certain kind of half-pathetic grievance. Her curiosity got the better of her prudence, and she turned back.

"That morning," he began hastily, "when we were coming down the valley you picked me up twice."

"I picked *you* up?" repeated the astonished Alice.

"Yes—*contradicted* me, that's what I mean. Once when you said those rocks were volcanic; once when you said the flower you picked was a poppy. I didn't let on at the time, for it wasn't my say; but all the while you were talking I might have laid for you—"

"I don't understand you," said Alice, haughtily.

"I might have entrapped you before folks. But I only want you to know that *I'm* right, and here are the books to show it."

He drew aside the dingy calico curtain, revealed a small shelf of bulky books, took down two large volumes, one of Botany, one of Geology, nervously sought his text, and put them in Alice's outstretched hands.

"I had no intention—" she began, half-proudly, half-embarrassed.

"Am I right, miss?" he interrupted.

"I presume you are, if you say so."

"That's all, ma'am! Thank you."

Before the girl had time to reply, he was gone. When he again returned, it was with her horse, and Mrs. Rightbody and Ryder were awaiting her. But Miss Alice noticed that his own horse was missing.

"Are you not going with us?" she asked.

"No, ma'am."

"Oh, indeed!"

Miss Alice felt her speech was a feeble conventionalism, but it was all she could say. She, however, *did* something. Hitherto, it had been her habit to systematically reject his assistance in mounting to her seat. Now she awaited him. As he approached, she smiled

and put out her little foot. He instantly stooped ; she placed it in his hand, rose with a spring, and for one supreme moment Stanilaus Joe held her unresistingly in his arms. The next moment she was in the saddle, but in that brief interval of sixty seconds she had uttered a volume in a single sentence—

“ I hope you will forgive me ! ”

He muttered a reply, and turned his face aside quickly as if to hide it.

Miss Alice cantered forward with a smile, but pulled her hat down over her eyes as she joined her mother. She was blushing.

PART III.

MR. RYDER was as good as his word. A day or two later, he entered Mrs. Rightbody's parlour at the Chrysopolis Hotel in Stockton, with the information that he had seen the mysterious senders of the despatch, and that they were now in the office of the hotel waiting her pleasure. Mr. Ryder further informed her that these gentlemen had only stipulated that they should not reveal their real names, and that they should be introduced to her simply as the respective “Seventy-Four” and “Seventy-Five” who had signed the despatch sent to the late Mr. Rightbody.

Mrs. Rightbody at first demurred to this ; but on the assurance from Mr. Ryder that this was the only condition on which an interview would be granted, finally consented.

"You will find them square men, even if they are a little rough, ma'am; but if you'd like me to be present, I'll stop; though I reckon if ye'd calkilated on that, you'd have had me take care o' your business by proxy, and not come yourself three thousand miles to do it."

Mrs. Rightbody believed it better to see them alone.

"All right, ma'am. I'll hang round out here, and ef ye should happen to hev a ticklin' in your throat and a bad spell o' coughin', I'll drop in, careless like, to see if you don't want them drops. *Sabe?*"

And with an exceedingly arch wink, and a slight familiar tap on Mrs. Rightbody's shoulder, which might have caused the late Mr. Rightbody to burst his sepulchre, he withdrew.

A very timid, hesitating tap on the door was followed by the entrance of two men, both of whom, in general size, strength, and uncouthness, were ludicrously inconsistent with their diffident announcement. They proceeded in Indian file to the centre of the room, faced Mrs. Rightbody, acknowledged her deep courtesy by a strong shake of the hand, and drawing two chairs opposite to her, sat down side by side.

"I presume I have the pleasure of addressing—" began Mrs. Rightbody.

The man directly opposite Mrs. Rightbody turned to the other inquiringly.

The other man nodded his head, and replied,

"Seventy-Four."

"Seventy-Five," promptly followed the other.

Mrs. Rightbody paused, a little confused.

"I have sent for you," she began again, "to learn



*"I presume I have the pleasure of addressing—."—Page 34.

something more of the circumstances under which you gentlemen sent a despatch to my late husband."

"The circumstances," replied Seventy-Four, quietly, with a side glance at his companion, "panned out about in this yer style. We hung a man named Josh Silsbee down at Deadwood for hoss-stealin'. When I say *we*, I speak for Seventy-Five yer, as is present, as well as representin' so to speak seventy-two other gents as is scattered. We hung Josh Silsbee on squar, pretty squar, evidence. Afore he was strung up, Seventy-Five yer axed him, accordin' to custom, ef there was ennything he had to say, or enny request that he allowed to make of us. He turns to Seventy-Five, yer, and—"

Here he paused suddenly, looking at his companion.

"He sez, sez he," began Seventy-Five, taking up the narrative; "he sez, 'Kin I write a letter?' sez he. Sez I, 'Not much, ole man; ye've got no time.' Sez he, 'Kin I send a despatch by telegraph?' I sez, 'Heave ahead.' He sez—these is his dientikal words—'Send to Adam Rightbody, Boston. Tell him to remember his sacred compack with me thirty years ago.'"

"His sacred compack with me thirty years ago," echoed Seventy-Four. "His dientikal words."

"What was the compact?" asked Mrs. Rightbody, anxiously.

Seventy-Four looked at Seventy-Five, and then both arose and retired to the corner of the parlour, where they engaged in a slow but whispered deliberation. Presently they returned, and sat down again.

"We allow," said Seventy-Four, quietly but decidedly, "that *you* know what that sacred compact was."

Mrs. Rightbody lost her temper and her truthfulness together. "Of course," she said hurriedly, "I know ; but do you mean to say that you gave this poor man no further chance to explain before you murdered him ?"

Seventy-Four and Seventy-Five both rose again slowly and retired. When they returned again and sat down, Seventy-Five, who by this time, through some subtle magnetism, Mrs. Rightbody began to recognize as the superior power, said gravely,

"We wish to say, regarding this yer murder, that Seventy-Four and me is equally responsible. That we reckon also to represent, so to speak, seventy-two other gentlemen as is scattered. That we are ready, Seventy-Four and me, to take and holt that responsibility now and at any time, afore every man or men as kin be fetched agin us. We wish to say that this yer say of ours holds good yer in Californy or in any part of these United States."

"Or in Canady," suggested Seventy-Four.

"Or in Canady. We wouldn't agree to cross the water or go to furrin parts, unless absolutely necessary. We leaves the chise of weppings to your principal, ma'am, or being a lady, ma'am, and interested, to any one you may fetch to act for him. An advertisement in any of the Sacramento papers, or a playcard or handbill stuck unto a tree near Deadwood saying that Seventy-Four or Seventy-Five will communicate with this yer principal or agent of yours, will fetch us,—allers."

Mrs. Rightbody, a little alarmed and desperate, saw her blunder. "I mean nothing of the kind," she said hastily. "I only expected that you might have some further details

of this interview with Silsbee—that perhaps you could tell me—” a bold bright thought crossed Mrs. Rightbody’s mind, “something more about *her*.”

The two men looked at each other.

“I suppose your society have no objection to giving me information about *her*,” said Mrs. Rightbody, eagerly.

Another quiet conversation in the corner, and the return of both men.

“We want to say that we’ve no objection.”

Mrs. Rightbody’s heart beat high. Her boldness had made her penetration good. Yet she felt she must not alarm the men heedlessly.

“Will you inform me to what extent Mr. Rightbody, my late husband, was interested in *her*?”

This time it seemed an age to Mrs. Rightbody before the men returned from their solemn consultation in the corner. She could both hear and feel that their discussion was more animated than their previous conferences. She was a little mortified, however, when they sat down to hear Seventy-Four say slowly,

“We wish to say that we don’t allow to say *how* much.”

“Do you not think that the ‘sacred compact’ between Mr. Rightbody and Mr. Silsbee referred to *her*.”

“We reckon it do.”

Mrs. Rightbody, flushed and animated, would have given worlds had her daughter been present to hear this undoubted confirmation of her theory. Yet she felt a little nervous and uncomfortable even on this threshold of discovery.

“Is she here now?”

“She’s in Tuolumne,” said Seventy-Four.

"A little better looked arter than formerly," added Seventy-Five.

"I see. Then Mr. Silsbee *enticed* her away?"

"Well, ma'am, it *was* allowed as she runned away. But it wasn't proved, and it generally wasn't her style."

Mrs. Rightbody trifled with her next question. "She was pretty, of course?"

The eyes of both men brightened.

"She was *that*!" said Seventy-Four, emphatically.

"It would have done you good to see her," added Seventy-Five.

Mrs. Rightbody inwardly doubted it; but before she could ask another question, the two men again retired to the corner for consultation. When they came back there was a shade more of kindness and confidence in their manner, and Seventy-Four opened his mind more freely.

"We wish to say, ma'am, looking at the thing, by and large, in a far-minded way—that ez *you* seem interested, and ez Mr. Rightbody was interested, and was according to all accounts de-ceived and led away by Silsbee, that we don't mind listening to any proposition *you* might make, as a lady—allowin' you was ekally interested."

"I understand," said Mrs. Rightbody quickly. "And you will furnish me with any papers."

The two men again consulted.

"We wish to say, ma'am, that we think she's got papers, but—"

"I *must* have them, you understand," interrupted Mrs. Rightbody, "at any price!"

"We was about to say, ma'am," said Seventy-Five slowly, "that, considerin' all things—and you being a lady

—you kin have *her*, papers, pedigree, and guarantee for twelve hundred dollars!”

It has been alleged that Mrs. Rightbody asked only one question more, and then fainted. It is known, however, that by the next day it was understood in Deadwood that Mrs. Rightbody had confessed to the Vigilance Committee that her husband, a celebrated Boston millionaire, anxious to gain possession of Abner Springer's well-known sorrel mare, had incited the unfortunate Josh Silsbee to steal it; and that finally, failing in this, the widow of the deceased Boston millionaire was now in personal negotiation with the owners.

Howbeit, Miss Alice, returning home that afternoon, found her mother with a violent headache.

“We will leave here by the next steamer,” said Mrs. Rightbody, languidly. “Mr. Ryder has promised to accompany us.”

“But, mother—”

“The climate, Alice, is over-rated. My nerves are already suffering from it. The associations are unfit for you, and Mr. Marvin is naturally impatient.”

Miss Alice coloured slightly.

“But your quest, mother?”

“I've abandoned it.”

“But *I* have not,” said Alice, quietly. “Do you remember my guide at the Yo Semite, Stanislaus Joe? Well, Stanislaus Joe is—who do you think?”

Mrs. Rightbody was languidly indifferent.

“Well, Stanislaus Joe is the son of Joshua Silsbec.”

Mrs. Rightbody sat upright in astonishment.

“Yes; but, mother, he knows nothing of what we

know. His father treated him shamefully, and set him cruelly adrift years ago; and when he was hung, the poor fellow, in sheer disgrace, changed his name."

"But if he knows nothing of his father's compact, of what interest is this?"

"Oh, nothing! Only I thought it might lead to something."

Mrs. Rightbody suspected that "something," and asked, sharply, "And pray how did *you* find it out? You did not speak of it in the Valley."

"Oh, I didn't find it out till to-day," said Miss Alice, walking to the window. "He happened to be here, and —told me."

PART IV.

IF Mrs. Rightbody's friends had been astounded by her singular and unexpected pilgrimage to California so soon after her husband's decease, they were still more astounded by the information a year later that she was engaged to be married to a Mr. Ryder, of whom only the scant history was known that he was a Californian, and former correspondent of her husband. It was undeniable that the man was wealthy, and evidently no mere adventurer; it was rumoured that he was courageous and manly; but even those who delighted in his odd humour were shocked at his grammar and slang. It was said that Mr. Marvin had but one interview with his father-in-law elect, and returned so supremely disgusted that the match was broken off. The horse-stealing story, more or less

garbled, found its way through lips that pretended to decry it, yet eagerly repeated it. Only one member of the Rightbody family—and a new one—saved them from utter ostracism. It was young Mr. Ryder, the adopted son of the prospective head of the household, whose culture, manners, and general elegance fascinated and thrilled Boston with a new sensation. It seemed to many that Miss Alice should in the vicinity of this rare exotic forget her former enthusiasm for a professional life, but the young man was pitied by society, and various plans for diverting him from any *mesalliance* with the Rightbody family were concocted.

It was a wintry night, and the second anniversary of Mr. Rightbody's death, that a light was burning in his library. But the dead man's chair was occupied by young Mr. Ryder, adopted son of the new proprietor of the mansion, and before him stood Alice, with her dark eyes fixed on the table.

"There must have been something in it, Joe, believe me. Did you never hear your father speak of mine?"

"Never."

"But you say he was college bred, and born a gentleman, and in his youth he must have had many friends."

"Alice," said the young man, gravely, "when I have done something to redeem my name, and wear it again before these people, before *you*, it would be well to revive the past. But till then—"

But Alice was not to be put down. "I remember," she went on, scarcely heeding him, "that when I came in that night, papa was reading a letter, and seemed to be disconcerted."

"A letter?"

"Yes; but," added Alice, with a sigh, "when we found him here insensible, there was no letter on his person. He must have destroyed it."

"Did you ever look among his papers? If found, it might be a clue."

The young man glanced toward the cabinet. Alice read his eyes, and answered—

"Oh dear, no. The cabinet contained only his papers, all perfectly arranged—you know how methodical were his habits—and some old business and private letters, all carefully put away."

"Let us see them," said the young man, rising.

They opened drawer after drawer; files upon files of letters and business papers, accurately folded and filed. Suddenly Alice uttered a little cry, and picked up a quaint ivory paper-knife lying at the bottom of a drawer.

"It was missing the next day, and never could be found. He must have mislaid it here. This is the drawer," said Alice, eagerly.

Here was a clue. But the lower part of the drawer was filled with old letters, not labelled, yet neatly arranged in files. Suddenly he stopped, and said, "Put them back, Alice, at once."

"Why?"

"Some of these letters are in my father's handwriting."

"The more reason why *I* should see them," said the girl, imperatively. "Here, you take part and I'll take part, and we'll get through quicker."

There was a certain decision and independence in her

manner which he had learned to respect. He took the letters, and in silence read them with her. They were old college letters, so filled with boyish dreams, ambitions, aspirations, and Utopian theories, that I fear neither of these young people even recognized their parents in the dead ashes of the past. They were both grave, until Alice uttered a little hysterical cry, and dropped her face in her hands. Joe was instantly beside her.

"It's nothing, Joe, nothing. Don't read it, please; please, don't. It's so funny—it's so very queer."

But Joe had, after a slight, half-playful struggle, taken the letter from the girl. Then he read aloud the words written by his father thirty years ago.

"I thank you, dear friend, for all you say about my wife and boy. I thank you for reminding me of our boyish compact. He will be ready to fulfil it, I know, if he loves those his father loves, even if you should marry years later. I am glad for your sake, for both our sakes, that it is a boy. Heaven send you a good wife, dear Adams, and a daughter, to make my son equally happy."

Joe Silsbee looked down, took the half-laughing, half-tearful face in his hands, kissed her forehead, and, with tears in his grave eyes, said, "Amen!"

* * * * * *

I am inclined to think that this sentiment was echoed heartily by Mrs. Rightbody's former acquaintances, when, a year later, Miss Alice was united to a professional gentleman of honour and renown, yet who was known to be the son of a convicted horse-thief. A few remembered

the previous Californian story, and found corroboration therefor; but a majority believed it a just reward to Miss Alice for her conduct to Mr. Marvin, and as Miss Alice cheerfully accepted it in that light, I do not see why I may not end my story with happiness to all concerned.





The Grutch-Handled Stick.

A STRANGE STORY.

By F. C. BURNAND.



IT was night.

I was sitting in a brown study—my own. The subject of my meditation was a paper for a Christmas Annual.

The candles gave an occasional sympathizing flicker. First one idea struck me, then another, then a third. Each excellent in its way, but leading to absolutely nothing.

I caught the ideas as they flew, and jotted them down on paper, as a collector spits moths with a pin. My ideas were all curious and remarkable specimens, but being once fixed on paper with a pencil, they only quivered for a time, and then were heard of no more.

I had just spitted the twentieth specimen, and was looking over the lot to see what could be done with any one of them separately, or what use could be made of four or five together, and was reaching a point of blank despair, when I heard a ring at the front door bell.

Time, midnight. As a rule, I do not expect a visitor at midnight. The household was wrapped in slumber, and from what I knew of my household when wrapped in slumber, I felt pretty sure that a visitor might break the bell wire before he would catch a snorer's ear. I was certain of this, because once, and once only, I had mislaid my latch-key. I had left it on the table in the hall, and so I was on one side of the front door, and my latch-key on the other. At that moment, while standing on the doorstep of my house, I felt that there was no place like home at 2 a.m. on a cold wintry morning, with a drizzle of rain, and all the servants fast asleep.

"Both child and nurse are fast asleep,
'And closed is every door,"

as the glee has it (or "hasn't it" if my memory is defective), before arriving at the inspiring chorus—

"Uprouse ye then, my merry, merry men,
For 'tis our opening day."

Opening! Not a sign of it. . . .

Again, as I was wondering whether my imagination had played me a practical joke, I heard the bell.

Just one doubt about it this time. I was not certain. I had three flights of stairs to descend if I was to open it myself, and in a London house, even though it be home, I am always nervous at night about coming suddenly on blackbeetles. I have no objection to ghosts. I would rather meet a ghost than a burglar any night of the week. But I am far from sure whether I would not rather meet a burglar than a blackbeetle. We know of whom it is reported that he is not so black as he has been painted.

We also know that in this case if the paint could be scratched off, we should get at an angel of quite another colour. But no one has ever yet reported of a blackbeetle that it is anything but naturally black, and a beetle,—the blackest and beetlest of all creeping things.

Again the bell.

This time not the slightest doubt about it.

It was asking, "Is any one up?" and had not been answered.

I roused myself into action. With a glass-shaded candle, I descended cautiously. No blackbeetles. Not a sound. Not a snore from below.

Not a soul up: the only thing up was the door-chain, which remains on duty all night.

Slowly and cautiously I undid the fastenings.

Slowly, and still more cautiously, I opened the door.

On the step without stood a man. A stranger, an utter stranger, to me.

He begged my pardon for disturbing me at that unearthly hour—that was his expression. He was not a burglar; at least it occurred to me that no burglar would have been so considerate and polite as to have begun his work in this way. At the same time, this is a hint which might be useful to burglars who wish to conduct their business in a more pleasant and civilised manner than has hitherto been adopted. Claude Duval was a highwayman of the most polished school. Why should not there be a Claude Duval among burglars? He could begin, "I beg your pardon, sir, for breaking in upon you at this hour, but I must trouble you for—" here he could mention such articles of value as he knew were in your bureau, or

your pantry, or your strong box, or your jewel-case, at the same time producing an elegant revolver.

The stranger was not a Claude Duval. He was a thin, sallow man, of about the middle height, and of the same age as height, with a wan and worn expression, and a sad smile on his decidedly handsome countenance.

He was in evening dress, of gentlemanly cut, neither swellish nor seedy. His eyes were expressive, but of what, I could not make out. There was something in his smile that struck me as peculiar; and, in fact, his whole bearing was that of a man who had seen better days and worse nights, and who could a tale unfold, that might, like any other long tail, make a considerable coil.

"Sir," I said, in that most courteous manner which I inherit from my greatest-great-grandmother, whose portrait, by Sir Geoffrey Pinxit, now hangs in my unique collection—(I may speak of it as unique, as it is the only picture I possess of any kind). "Sir," I said, "may I inquire, having come down for that purpose, what the deuce you mean by making this infernal noise at my door at this hour? If I see a policeman—"

He put up his hand with a deprecatory action, and his mild but piercing eyes beamed with a melancholy light as he interrupted me.

"Sir," he said, in an accent which struck me as that of a distinguished foreigner who had been naturalized in this country for more than six months; "Sir, I have called upon you for your own benefit, not for mine. With this life, its joys and its miseries, I have no more to do. A mysterious influence has guided me here. I am about to quit this land for ever. Before I go, however, I have a

trust which I must deposit with some one : why not with you ? ”

“ Why with me ? ” I asked.

“ Why not ? You are a member of the Honourable Guild of Fishmongers, are you not ? ”

“ I am.”

“ Then that is sufficient for me. You are a Fishmonger ; therefore, you are an honest man. Shakespeare has said so. An honest man is Heaven’s noblest work. Is that not so ? ”

I admitted it.

“ Then,” he continued, “ what is the deduction ? Deduct for yourself.”

I am no hand at arithmetic ; so I begged him to consider it as deducted, and to go on—about his business. I had only come down in my dressing-gown, and the cold wind was beginning to find me out—or find me in.

“ I wish,” the stranger went on, “ to make your fortune.”

“ Indeed ? ” I returned, beginning to be interested.

“ Here,” and as he spoke he produced a roll of papers from the inside pocket of his ulster, “ are the materials.”

“ Shares ? Bonds ? ” I inquired.

“ No, neither bonds nor stocks,” he replied with a forced expression, “ for both have been forms of punishment in their time. No ; this is,” . . . and here for a moment he seemed to stagger and turn pale, as he gasped .

“ There are thousands of pounds in this. Here—take—quickly ” And before I could stretch out my arms, he had reeled and fallen heavily forwards against me, knocking me backwards into the hall. In a second I was on my legs, suspecting some

ruse on his part ; but no. The unhappy man lay apparently lifeless on the door-mat, with his feet on the threshold. His breathing—thank Heaven, he still breathed!—was heavy and laboured, and in his hand he clasped, with all the energy of tetanic convulsion, the roll of paper containing the thousands of which he had so recently spoken.

My first impulse was to relieve him of the papers—lift him outside, and leave him on the door-step. My second was to drag him within, close the door, examine the papers while he was still insensible, and by their contents decide on my plan of action in his regard.

I pulled him within. I closed the door, and put up the chain. The great bell of St. Vitus-in-Vinctis, our parish church, tolled one. It seemed to say decidedly, and without hesitation, “Yes ; you are right !” It seemed to sound a victory for me : it seemed in fact to sing out “WON !”

The candle was burning low. While the light permitted, I attempted to force the papers from his grasp.

No. Impossible.

I was at a disadvantage, being fearful of tearing them. From time to time he rolled over, groaning heavily, and lay, with his hands clutching the precious documents hidden beneath him, face downwards. What was to be done ? Something : and quickly, as Shakespeare has said, only expressing himself more poetically. After all what is poetry, but the art of colouring and enlarging a prose picture ?

“If,” I mused aloud, “I could only restore him to consciousness for a few minutes, if I could only dash some

water over him, or force a drop of brandy down his throat."

He groaned, and over his upturned ghastly face there passed a sudden fitful light, a gleam of reviving intelligence. His parched lips moved, and he mouthed like a freshly-landed fish.

"The brandy is in my study," I said to myself aloud; "I do not like to go for it, and leave him here."

I determined on one more effort.

This time with more success. Either animation was returning, or I had hit upon the right way of lifting him. He staggered to his legs, leaning heavily on my shoulder, his lips still moving as though a drop of water would be *the* saving of his life.

In this state I supported him to my study. Once there, I placed him in an arm-chair.

On the table, at his elbow, were one bottle of whisky, one of brandy, a box of cigars, some soda-water, a lemon, and a small kettle of water with a spirit-lamp underneath.

I poured out a glass of brandy.

He sipped it. Opened his eyes, closed them, and would have been off again, had I not, with a promptitude which astonished myself, at once placed the glass to his lips.

He drank. He awoke.

"Where am I?" he asked, then, after staring about wildly, he looked at me with a puzzled expression, and said, "Is it out?"

"Is what out? The candle?" I returned.

"The candle? No, the tooth."

"Whose tooth?"

"Mine."

"Tooth! I'm not a dentist."

"No!" he exclaimed, dreamily, but evidently surprised at the information. Then—"where am I?"

I informed him. He pushed back his hair, and pressed his hand to his forehead.

"Yes," he said, "I remember. I am a teetotaller; but *exceptio probat regulam*. Even Father Matthew himself would take a drop—a mere drop—on such an occasion; *à votre santé, cher monsieur!*" And he tossed off a glass of neat brandy, smacking his lips afterwards with immense gusto.

My brandy is *vieux cognac*, and costs me five guineas a dozen. Clearly my visitor was a scholar.

"Excellent brandy!" he exclaimed, filling another glass. I indicated the whisky and soda. "No, no," he replied, "too good for mixing. We'll come to whisky when we want an *encore*. *A la votre!* Hoop là!" and down went another glass.

It was time to help myself, and I did so. So did he; also to a cigar. So did I. It was half-past-one a.m., and here was I smoking and drinking in my own house, in my own sanctum, with a perfect stranger—a stranger at all events, but whether "perfect" or not, remained to be seen.

He commenced talking on all sorts of topics—furniture, art, literature, zoology, geology, gambling, divinity, stock exchange ventures, politics, and, I am bound to confess, I found him a decidedly pleasant and agreeable companion.

The night wore on. I hadn't an idea who he was, whence he came, or what his business might be in my house, in my study, at this time of night.

The small hours were getting larger and larger ; the quantities in the brandy and whisky bottles were becoming small by degrees, and beautifully less.

Suddenly I brought him up with a jerk, so to speak.

"Sir," I said, and my voice seemed to be produced with difficulty—perhaps I had caught cold—"may I ask what you are doing here?"

"My benefactor, my preserver has a right to ask anything," he returned looking very serious. He lifted the brandy-bottle, it was empty ; he took up the whisky-bottle, not a drop. He shook his head gravely, and rose from his seat—with some difficulty, as it seemed to me. I fancy I must have had a sudden bilious attack, or rheumatism, perhaps caught at the street door, for I found myself unable to rise from my chair.

I apologized for this apparent want of courtesy.

"The explanation is quite unnecessary," said the stranger, in a sepulchral tone. "I have fulfilled my mission here. My time has come to an end. My life here, on this miserable planet is finished for ever. Farewell!"

The lights burned blue, there was a vapoury haze about the room that rendered everything indistinct.

The figure was vanishing rapidly.

Undismayed, I called out with sudden energy,

"The manuscript! The papers that were to make my fortune! Where—"

"Here," he answered, in a low, melancholy tone. "I cannot leave them with you. Were I to do so, you would not thank me, for I should be compelled to haunt you every night until you had destroyed them."

"But their contents—" I cried, intending to say more, had he not cut me short.

"Their contents explain mysteries of the past, the present, and the future," he said; and again his form seemed to be melting away in the vaporous mist that encircled him.

"The future!" I exclaimed. "Does it tell me anything about Turks, about Egyptian finance, about Russian Government Securities, Chilian Coupons, Erie Shares, and Bolivian Bonds?"

For I was in all these things, and had been much puzzled during the past year by the ups and downs, and chops and changes, in the political and financial world.

"Everything," he replied; "but the life within me is almost extinct. I am called to another sphere. I must go. This is my last night on earth."

"Then," I said, for my curiosity was aroused, "if it's your last, let it be a good 'un. Come," I added, beginning to be more at home with my visitor, who might have been either a ghost or a convict, "if you'll read your manuscript to me, I'll—I'll keep the life in you with another bottle of brandy—and another cigar."

The offer was accepted. He opened the bundle, and read to me the following extraordinary extract from a diary, which I commenced to note down on the spot, taking it from him in shorthand. The next day I referred to my own notes, which, being almost illegible, I deciphered with considerable difficulty, owing probably to the pace of my writing, or to his indistinctness, or to the dim light,

or to the supernatural spiritual influences* pervading the chamber on this extraordinary occasion. However, aided by my excellent memory, I managed to arrange in some sort of connected order this strange statement, which, *if true*, accounts for many events in the past, and may afford to those who are capable of *reading between the lines*, and *seizing a hint*, an opportunity of realizing an enormous and colossal fortune. Should any of my readers, attain this most desirable end, through the study of this paper, let them, as the song says, "remember me," and give me a handsome percentage for the information.

THE STRANGER'S MS.

NOTE.—"*There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*"

Within the last few years the fashion has grown up of going about everywhere with a stick.

To operas, theatres, clubs, concerts, private parties, every swell brought his own stick.

The great rage, born of the latest fashion in decorative art, was for crutch-handled sticks.

Never out of the fashion for a moment, I, too, being, as you see, still sufficiently young (all people are, I find, about the same age, except the very old ones, who really seem stationary), and *tout à fait comme il faut*, deter-

* Is "spiritual influences" quite the correct expression? Not on any account would we be rude, or for one moment suggest that our contributor is not in perfect *bona fides*; but if "spiritual" were spelt with a final "ous" instead of an "al," wouldn't it be more correct?—ED.

mined to purchase a stick of this description—"Crutch-handled."

On the first of . . . (month partially obliterated, but it looks like April. Date totally illegible), I went to a stick and umbrella shop.

"I want a crutch-handled stick," I said.

The shopman, a curmudgeonish-looking old man, with a dirty, bald speckled head, and wearing horn-rimmed spectacles, paid me no sort of attention, being deeply engaged at that moment with a customer, who could not make up his mind as to the purchase of a singularly handsome gold-mounted, highly polished stick of some rare wood unknown to me.

I was on the point of turning away and walking out of the shop, when, lying among a second-hand lot of rubbish, I saw an ebony crutch-handled stick, dull from loss of polish, but with a peculiar handle, which caused a marked difference between it and all other sticks. The handle represented a viper with its mouth open. It might have been an accidental resemblance, though this would hardly be, as there was nothing *dental*—whether *acci* or otherwise about it, being simply a *viper shape* with a mouth open—no eyes, no tongue—and, in fact, just as I have sketched it, nothing more.

"What," I asked, "is the price of *that* stick?"

The old curmudgeon paid no more attention to me than if I had been one of the second-hand bundle, bound up with a lot of other sticks. His daughter, however, a plain girl, with remarkably good eyes and a neat figure, timidly observed that her father would soon be disengaged, that these sticks, having only arrived wholesale that very

morning, had not yet been priced, but that, if I would select one, she would go to her father and get his answer.

I selected my friend the viper.

I tried it. I held it in my hand. I seemed to cling to it. I pressed on it; I leant on it, and found it very good security.

It wanted no cutting down. It was just suited to my stature.

It required only a little rubbing—that was all, and, having once got it in my possession, I somehow felt an affection for it which prevented my parting with it. “I should like to know,” I said to the girl, “how much your father wants for this.”

“Let me take it to him, sir, I will inquire.”

“No, thank you, I would rather not part with it lest some one else should take fancy to it. I will wait,” I added, with a glance at the old man, who was still bargaining about the valuable walking-stick with the undecided customer.

“I wish that fellow would settle at once and have done with it,” I said to myself.

Scarcely had the thought occurred to me, than the old shopman’s face beamed. The customer had settled to buy it at the price named, and there was the money.

“Now I trust he’ll attend to me, confound him!” I muttered.

“What is it, sir?” asked the old man. He was at my elbow. Could he have overheard my remark? Impossible! I was not in the habit of thinking aloud.

“This stick,” I said, “how much?”

“Oh!” he grumbled, evidently suspecting that I was

a connoisseur in sticks, and that there was something specially valuable in my selection. "I can't let that stick go for an ordinary sum."

"Well, how much?" I repeated.

"Three pounds," was his answer.

"Absurd," I exclaimed.

"It may be absurd, sir," he replied nettled, "but *that* is the price, and not a penny less."

I eyed it regretfully. I was either to buy it at that price, or leave it.

"Well," I said, "I've taken a fancy to the stick."

"Fancies are expensive," said the old man, grimly, as he gave change to his customer, and bowed him out of the shop.

"I wish," I said enviously, "that that rich person would come back and make me a present of this stick."

The customer *had* returned while I was speaking. I had not seen him. I blushed, colouring up to the roots of my hair, as he must have heard my remark, for which I murmured an apology.

"I was only joking," I began, but he did not seem to know that I was addressing him, and going straight to the old shopman he said,

"I want to give that stick as a present to that gentleman there. It is three pounds. Here are three pounds."

"I cannot permit, sir," I exclaimed, overwhelmed by this extraordinary generosity on the part of an entire stranger. "I really cannot permit you to—"

"You are very welcome, sir," returned the stranger. "I don't know why I give it you. I haven't the slightest

idea. It is an impulse. There is the stick in your hands. It is yours."

"I wish my funds were sufficient to make you some return as a memento of your kindness," I said, putting my hand into my waistcoat-pocket.

I started. There was something there.

I mean, that when I left my home there had been in my pocket seven and sixpence, and an empty sovereign purse. Now there was the seven and sixpence sure enough and *the purse was full*.

I examined it. Real sovereigns.

"I find I have some change with me," I said, "now I must insist on you permitting me to give you some little memento."

"My dear sir," laughed the customer, "you are very good. The fact is I deal here regularly, and there is only one thing I should like in this house, and that, I fancy, is beyond either your means or mine to purchase, because old Mr. Busk won't part with it. It's a chiming clock, value about a hundred and eighty guineas, that has been in his family for years, and stands now on the staircase."

"Ah," said Mr. Busk, determinedly, "money doesn't buy that clock of me. I leave it to my children, as it was left to me by my mother, and to her by her grandmother."

"I wish you would part with it, Mr. Busk," I said.

"Well," said Mr. Busk, quite suddenly, and, indeed, before I had got the words out of my mouth, "I *will* part with it. You shall have it."

"No!" exclaimed both the customer and myself, utterly

astonished at the marvellous rapidity of this change of sentiments. "You don't mean it?"

"I *do* mean it," replied Mr. Busk resolutely, and with a tinge of annoyance in his manner, as though resenting our implied doubt of his sincerity; "you shall have it."

"But, father—" implored his daughter.

"No," he answered, putting her aside, "I have said it. He shall have it."

"The price?" I inquired.

"The price?" inquired the customer.

Mr. Busk turned on the latter sharply, and said, "Look here, don't *you* interfere. I ain't selling it to *you*. I'm parting with it to *him*," and he pointed to me.

"But," I said, "I'm afraid I can't pay a hundred and eighty guineas for it; and, however much I may wish it, I don't suppose you would give it me as a present,"

Mr. Busk seemed to jump at the idea as a solution of a knotty point.

"Yes, I will," he shouted, violently. "It is yours. Take it."

The customer stared, so did Miss Busk. Clearly, her father had gone mad.

"Father, consider—" she began, almost crying.

"I *have* considered," returned Busk, savagely. "I give him that old clock. I don't know *why* I give it, but I *do* give it. It's an impulse."

"Thank you, very much," I said mildly, for I was puzzled and bothered by this second gift. "I should like some of your men to bring a cart and move it away at once, and they can take it to this gentleman's address."

The door at the back opened, and in came three men

in dirty shirt sleeves, from their work of umbrella-making and stick-cutting, etc.

"Here we are, sir," they said, and at once, opening another door, leading into the passage, they went to work with a will, and in a quarter of an hour or less they had hoisted this old relic of the past on to a cart, and were bearing it off toward Portman Square, where the customer had given his address.

"But," said the latter, "I must really repay you—"

"Whenever you like," I said; "it has cost me nothing."

Mr. Busk did not seem to heed our presence in the shop, and made no further remark on the clock transaction. It had gone out of his mind, *or* he had no mind for it to go out of. His daughter was weeping in a corner.

"Recompense *her*," I whispered to the rich customer.

"How much," he whispered back again.

"Well, were I you," I replied, "I should like to give her as much as I could conveniently afford—say a hundred guineas."

"By all means," he replied with alacrity, and pulling that sum in notes from his pocket, *he* presented them to Miss Busk.

"I wish everybody were as generous as you!" I exclaimed, in admiration.

We were about to leave the shop when we were stopped by the influx of a crowd, a surging respectable crowd of men and women, all bearing cheques, notes, and money in their hands, and crying out, each one of them,

"I've come to give a hundred pounds to Miss Busk."

Was it Bedlam broke loose?



"They hoisted the relic on to a cart."—Page 62.

We could not get out of the shop, on account of the surging and ever-increasing crowd.

"Confound the people!" I said, impatiently, "I wish they were all at Jericho."

In a second there was a cessation of the turmoil; within five minutes the street was cleared.

"Where on earth have they all disappeared to?" I wondered.

"Where?" repeated a strange, chuckling voice. "*You* ought to know."

I looked down. The voice and the chuckle came from a little wizen, spindle-shaped man in black. I say "man," but he was the very spit of one of Cruikshank's imps.

"*I* ought to know!" I returned, much astonished. "Why ought I to know?"

"Because you wished them at Jericho, and they've gone to Jericho. Haven't you got the crutch-handled stick?"

I had, it was true; but I didn't see the connection.

"I shall call on you again before long," said the chuckling, impish man significantly.

I turned to ask him when I might expect his visit, but he had disappeared. Instead of "disappeared," I had better say "vanished."

There was no smell of sulphur, no flash, no flame, no thunder. I felt that all this was mysterious very mysterious, but nothing more.

A few moments afterwards, I was strolling onwards with my new stick, meditating on the extraordinary events of the morning.

I strolled down to the club; they were discussing

Eastern affairs. I had at that time settled in my own mind the best policy.

"I wish," I said, firmly striking my crutch-handled stick on the floor, "I wish I were Lord Beaconsfield for just half-an-hour, I'd put 'em all to-rights."

In a second—in less if that were possible—I was conscious of a change in my existence—in my individuality.

I had become Lord Beaconsfield. I knew it, just as one would know it in a dream. Only this was a reality. I had a curl on my forehead—the last remnant of my Apollo-like locks of days gone by, a tuft on my chin, and an Oriental sensation about my nose. At a large table-desk I sat—in Downing Street, I believe. We were *in camera*. A private and confidential secretary was there, with bright eyes, a sharp, brusque manner. Also a gentleman, with noble brow and considerable beard. This was "renowned Salisbury." There were some other people in the room. We were discussing the future.

"And the plan you were about to suggest?" asked Lord Salisbury to me.

"Simply this. Telegraph to Russia terms of agreement." A secretary did it at once. I went on, "Telegraph to the Porte terms of agreement." Another secretary did this. "Now to frame it for publication," I said, "the latter will only be revealed at Berlin."

"Berlin!" exclaimed Lord Salisbury, somewhat surprised. "Then there *will* be a Congress after all?"

"Certainly there will," I answered, "and—"—here with a wave of my hand, I dismissed the secretaries and all the others. "*Entre nous*, my plan is simple. We

shall first have the black troops from India, move them to Malta, just to show their colour, you understand !”

“Black to mate in one move,” observed Lord Salisbury.

“Very good—for you, Sarum,” I replied, being a bit tickled by his witticism, which was not equal to anything of my own in Coningsby, Venetia, and Lothair (which last, however, I’m inclined now to refer to as a mistake).

“Then after *that*—we shall have shown ’em what we *can* do, and what we mean to do ; then Russia will be inclined to treat, and so will Turkey. Germany—I mean Bismarck—will be delighted just now to hold the scales. He wants to come forward a bit, as he has lost prestige lately, and will most probably have to spend his money in getting up some police excitement, and hire a regicide or two for party purposes, before his election time. Well, he’ll be delighted to take the chair. Greece shall be promised fairly, and dealt with as fairly as promised ; and here is my map ;” and I drew on a sheet of paper a view of the Eastern territory in question, the Mediterranean, and a dark spot on it.

“What’s that ?” asked Lord Salisbury ; “a blot on the plan ?”

“No blot,” I answered ; “there are no blots on any plan of mine. That is the Island of Delights ; that is the Haven of Peace. That is where the Cyprians used to dwell, and where the Cypriotes live now.”

“In fact, Cyprus,” said Salisbury, yawning.

“In fact, Cyprus,” I repeated ; “but don’t yawn. England will occupy Cyprus, and that will be our sentinel’s watch-box.”

"Is this a certainty, or only on the cards?" asked my Lord.

"It is a certainty," I said, rapping my crutch-handled stick on the table, "because within the next six months *I wish it.*"

The clock struck. I had been Lord Beaconsfield for half-an-hour. Once more I stood in the club-room; but on the desk of the private cabinet in Downing Street I had left my notes, my plans, and my map of the Mediterranean with my clear design for Cyprus on it.

Since that day what has happened?

I can only appeal to the event as evidence of what I say.

I looked at my watch; it was 2 p.m. There was time before me. Knowing that the news would not be out for more than a month, I went into the City and bought up Turks and Ottoman Bank Shares.

* * * * *

It was only gradually that I began to connect the sudden change in my existence with my possession of this stick.

I tried it. I was right.

The little impish man in black often dropped in on me unexpectedly, just to see, he said, how I was getting on. The stick, he informed me, had belonged to an old friend of his, deceased nearly two hundred years ago, an amiable old lady, who had been burnt for witchcraft.

"She never would have suffered this martyrdom," observed my little friend, "but for her having lost the stick."

This mysterious personage never stayed with me for more than five minutes at a time. He once led the conversation towards theology, and commenced talking about the soul. Beyond this, and the fact of his always being

dressed in black, I have no reason to suppose he was a clergyman of any persuasion ; at all events, he never persuaded *me*. One of these days I may have something more to say about him: at present, I am not even acquainted with his whereabouts.

I have neither time nor space here to record the marvels of the crutch-handled stick. Another day when you ask me I will return and do so.

Alas! I have lost it.

Wonders never did cease while I had that stick.

Did I want to be the Sultan! I was the Sultan. Did I want to be the Emperor of Russia; I was the Emperor of Russia.

Did I want to be anybody (of my own sex), I was anybody. I have lived several lives. I have been surfeited—jaded with pleasure. The day when I had drained the cup of luxury to the dregs, and was satiated with everything and weary of everybody, I said, thoughtlessly, for I had hitherto been so guarded in expressing myself, "Well, just for a change, I should like to be a pauper without anything in the world."

Alas! alas! this poverty cost me more than ever I had spent in all my Arabian Nights of millionairism. In wishing to be a pauper, I had forgotten to add, "With nothing in the world except my crutch-handled stick!"

In a second I was what you see me. The demon had betrayed me—as in *Der Freischutz*, as in all similar cases. "Six shall achieve, seven deceive"—and I had been caught in the meshes of the Fiend. . . .

When I say this, I admit that I write in bitterness of spirit. I *may* be doing a gross injustice to the little

man in black, who, perhaps, was not a fiend at all, but, on the contrary, my Guardian Angel, in an eccentric disguise. If I have offended him by the use of the word "fiend," I here willingly retract, and ask the reader to insert the letter "r" in "fiend," so as to read it "*friend*."

What shall I do? I have much more to say—I have picked up, during my transmogrifications, secrets which would be worth thousands, millions to several people. Who will listen to me? Who will, in fact, speculate in me? I leave my card on the table. . . .

* * * * *

At this point my manuscript notes of the interview are so blurred as to be hopelessly undecipherable. Some fluid of a brownish yellowish colour, and of an odour bearing a strong resemblance to brandy and whisky mixed, had been spilt over the paper and the writing-desk. At what time I had gone to bed, at what time he had left, I do not know. Whether there had been a struggle between myself and the ghost (or convict) in consequence of some overmastering desire on my part to possess myself of his MS., or whether the ghost (not convict at all) had disappeared, and left me fainting; or whether the man, a haunted man and not a ghost, had been suddenly whisked away to his doom by the witch of the crutched stick, I am totally unable to say, and quite unequal to guessing. All is mystery. "The rest is silence."

At present I am visiting all the umbrella and stick shops, everywhere and anywhere, in the hope of one day finding the talisman which my mysterious visitor so foolishly lost. And when I do get it I shall at once wish—

To be beautiful for ever, and equally young, say thirty-one.

To be five times as rich as all the Rothschilds, with none of the responsibilities.

Always to be happy, always contented, and always finding fresh pleasures, and when this world should be worn out to go on to another and a better, thence to anotherer and a betterer, and so on *ad infinitum* through space—always taking care never to drop, or on any account to part with my

CRUTCH-HANDLED STICK.





The Other Fellow.

By J. W. DEFOREST.



THE senator had made his bargain, but he still pondered it dubiously at odd moments, and occasionally played with a disposition to break it.

“Of course I am free to cut loose,” he muttered, lolling back in his easy-chair, with the air of a man who tries to believe that he is master of the situation. “At all events, I am not bound to stand by my bond, if—the Other Fellow doesn’t stand by his.”

He had an aversion, we may suspect, to thinking distinctly of his partner in agreement, or to calling him by his name. Hence perhaps it was that, even in the solitude of his own room, even in the privacy of his own soul, he alluded to him as “the Other Fellow.”

“It is a monstrous offer,” continued Senator Wesley, puffing away at a thirty-cent cigar. “I haven’t the least idea that he can carry it out. If he doesn’t fulfil it to the

minutest particular, I shall feel perfectly free to cut loose from him."

But as he thought over the events of the day it seemed to him probable, and even alarmingly certain, that the Other Fellow was indeed discharging his part of the compact. The same men who up to yesterday were sending him urgent dunning letters had mailed him thankful receipts and solicited a continuance of his custom. Who paid them? His banker had not only returned him his protested notes cancelled, but had notified him that a draft of ten thousand dollars had been passed to his credit. Who sent it? The senator smiled as he thought how astonished Mr. Bursary must have looked over that paper, and how he might perhaps have smelt of it to see if he could detect an odour of brimstone.

Moreover, how was it that Mace, the importer, had all of a sudden taken a fancy to give him baskets of champagne and boxes of Havanas? Did the old fellow want some change made in the tariff? Or had he set his grocery soul upon the project of getting a United States senator to one of his dinner parties? Or were these showers of luxuries results of the princely interference of the Other Fellow? At all events—and here Mr. Wesley took a cautious, investigating puff,—there seemed to be no flavour of sulphur in the cigars. Had he perceived such a taint, how quickly would he have thrown down the abominable weed, and abjured his tremendous bargain! At least, so he thought, and quite distinctly, too, absurd as the thought seemed. Meantime, it is not at all certain what he would have done in such a case. There are times and circumstances when a certain sort of man

would rather smoke brimstone regalias than none at all.

Presently the senator fell into a more cheerful, and, as he said to himself, a more rational frame. Why should he wonder at his newly-blossomed prosperity, and attribute to it any roots deeper than the healthful soil of earth? Had he not simply accepted yesterday evening the presidency of the Great Consolidated Railroad Company? Was not his honest, above-board salary therefrom a clear twenty thousand a year? Was he not at the head of one of the wealthiest and most influential combinations of capital in the whole republic? And voters, too!—voters by the wardful! There were ten thousand workmen, more or less, under his direction; they could turn the scale in more than one congressional district which he named to himself; they might change the political complexion of a potent State which he knew of.

To be sure, his duties as president were rather nominal than real; he was something like the Queen of England,—he was a ceremony. He knew nothing whatever about railroads; could not say whether locomotives were high-pressure or low-pressure; could hardly tell an H rail from a T. Nothing whatever would he have to do with purchases, or rates of fare, or payment of coupons, or division of profits. It was some other fellow—and probably that Other Fellow—who really had rule. His own business was merely to let himself be called president, to lend all the dignity of his character and office to the Great Consolidated, and to see that its interests did not suffer in the councils of the nation. For these things was he to draw his twenty thousand a year, and to get

that respectable commission on the new bonds, second mortgage.

All the same, his power was indisputably great, and his revenue promised to be enormous. No wonder that merchandising men hurried in their receipts, and reverentially begged him to order more. Probably the Great Consolidated had traded at their counters over night, or had simply and straightforwardly drawn its auriferous finger over his debits. Likewise with Bursary, the banker, and Mace, the importer. There was no need of supposing anything other-worldly, or even extraordinary, to account for the fact that a railroad president, with ever so much a year, should find himself out of debt. No wonder, either, that all of a sudden all sorts of men should obviously regard him with increased deference; no wonder, for instance, that his brother senators had that day hearkened to him with an attention and respect which they had never before accorded.

As he thought of these things, and of the solid pecuniary causes which undoubtedly lay at the bottom of them, he drew a deep sigh of repose and satisfaction. What a restfulness there was in being out of debt, and especially out of that confounded land speculation, with its mire of sinking values and of mortgages! What a joy it was to have his pockets once more full, and in fact running over! What a luxury to smoke such cigars, and not even think of the expense sufficiently to say, Curse it!

"I have made a ten-strike!" he laughed aloud. "And I am one of the youngest members of the senate; yes, and upon my soul, one of the best-looking."

He was indeed, as United States senators go, a man of

considerable personal charms. More than one lovely feminine lobbyist had called on Senator Matthew Wesley with the intent of captivating, and had gone away captivated, feeling that she would gladly give up her claim and its shadowy millions for the slenderest chance of that man's impecunious love. More than one youthful lady, fresh and undefiled from the bosom of her home, had watched him with bright eyes from the gallery, and said to her intimate friend, or shyly thought to herself, "Isn't he splendid?"

Well, the place perhaps lent its glory to him, and added to the brilliance of his natural halo. To my masculine optics he was not so much beautiful as uncommonly good-looking. His broad shoulders, capacious chest, and mighty limbs needed about twenty pounds off to make them Apollonean. There was the merest atom too much of double chin appended to his otherwise comely aquiline countenance. His expression was manly and intelligent, certainly, but a little too domineering, and a little hardened. On the other hand (what was *then* unusual in our upper house), he retained in his cheeks something of the smoothness and bloom of youth, and sported on his head an abundant crown of glossy hair. Take him all in all,—his upright vigour, his chestnut curls, and his senatoriality,—he might fairly be called a handsome man, if indeed one ought not to say splendid.

Of a sudden the senator's cigar, though only half smoked out, tasted badly. It seemed to him that there was, in fact, a flavour of brimstone about it. He threw it into the fire, where, instead of burning quietly, as a cigar should, it blazed up in a blue flame and disappeared

almost in a moment. What was the matter with it,—or with him? He had only heard a strange foot in the passage and an extremely gentle tap on his door. The most commonplace circumstances will sometimes affect us singularly, and give us irrational, not to say unearthly, impressions. Healthy and muscular and broad of chest as the senator was, it cost him an effort to say audibly, "Come in."

The man who entered did not seem the sort of man to inspire fear. He was, to be sure, attired in solid black from head to foot, like that mysterious personage who frequented the witch-meetings of early New England, and whose office it seems to have been to record the names of neophytes in a large volume. But, after all, it was only a morning-suit of black cheviot; it was such a suit as many a quiet business man wears to his office. And *that*—a quiet business man—is just what he would have been taken for by any one who did not know better, as perhaps the senator did.

The appearance of the stranger was not only quiet, but at first sight very attractive. His expression was vivacious, cultivated, and agreeable, barring that he sometimes threw out a glance of startling keenness, verging on the dissective and satirical. His carriage was graceful, noiseless, alert, supple as dancing, and yet daintily well bred. His features were Oriental; his complexion a dark and clear pallor; his eyes black, serene, and penetrating. It was impossible to guess his birthplace, unless indeed he might be a Philadelphian, or possibly a Baltimorean. It was equally difficult to divine his age, except so far as to say that he seemed to be in the prime of life. The

smile with which he entered was so courteous, and at the same time so clever, that any one who did not know him (as the senator did) would have called it fascinating.

"You have a charming suite of rooms," he said, glancing with the air of a virtuoso over Wesley's carved furniture, bronzes, and other costly nicknacks.

"Yes ; and preciously am I in debt for them ! " grumbled the senatorial sybarite, who could not help wanting to quarrel with something or somebody, so fretted was he by the presence of his visitor.

"I should suppose that all that must now be bygones," smiled the—the Other Fellow.

I may as well state here that I have only an unsupported suspicion as to the real name of this personage, and shall therefore usually mention him by the title which was oftenest accorded to him in Wesley's thoughts and conversation.

"It *is* a by-gone matter,—the financial embarrassment,—is it not ? " he added, in a tone of business-like insistence, qualified by his gracious smile.

"Oh—yes—certainly," stammered the senator. "I forgot myself. I am so used to being dunned, you know ! The truth is that I haven't heard the cry of the creditor to-day, and suppose I am out of the woods."

"I thought we must have seen to all those little matters," nodded the visitor. "Of course, too, you got a notice from the bank,—one half of your salary paid in advance."

"But, really, you ought to have taken the bills out of the ten thousand," urged the honourable, who was curiously anxious not to be paid too much, and indeed

felt just then as if he would like not to be paid anything.

"Oh, trifles, trifles!" smiled the Other Fellow. "You don't yet know what it is to be president of a railroad. We don't count so close in our corporation. And now,—if you will excuse me,—as to business?"

The conscript father turned deadly pale before this suggestion. It seemed as if he must have understood that "business" meant nothing less than mounting a chariot of fire and dashing into the mouth of a volcano, or some still hotter orifice.

"I have hardly been able to do much as yet," he gasped. "Only talked a little in private with senators."

"Yes, very good," bowed the Other Fellow approvingly. "The most telling work is done in private. Of course you haven't had time to accomplish much. You can't expect to build your Rome in a day."

The senator cringed. He was of honourable descent, and he represented a most honourable ancient State, and he had hitherto been an honourable legislator. It did not at all please him to have this bill—this huge piece of jobbery and trickery and bribery—called *his* Rome. And yet, on reflection, so it must be. Was he not president of the Great Consolidated, and in receipt of its unstinted salaries and perquisites?

"It will hardly do for you, the chief of our corporation, to speak or vote in favour of our bill—your bill."

The visitor said this with a brisk, clear, positive utterance, which was evidently the natural speech of a clear prompt, vigorous mind.

By way of assent the senator shook his head—his big

and once virtuous and still respected head—with great energy.

“By all means not,” responded the Other Fellow, in a tone which was thoroughly business-like, though not without a flavour of the sardonic. One might divine that, even while he felt obliged to treat of legislative corruption in a sensible and practicable spirit, it still afforded him entertainment.

“Well, let us hear what you have to suggest, secretary,” observed the honourable. “I should like to see exactly how far your views accord with mine.”

The actual manager of the Great Consolidated was not abashed by this assumption of independence and even of superiority on the part of the nominal manager. In his lucid, instructive, professional way, and smiling his sarcastic yet playful smile, he went on to give the conscript father a policy.

“You will, of course, be an example of modesty, self-abnegation, and dignity. It will be well to say, in a few of your best sentences, that, as a legislator, you can do nothing for this bill. But in private, as an interested individual, as the lawful trustee of our interests, you must necessarily be our advocate. You know all these gentlemen, and you have the right to approach them, and you will not fail to use it. There must be confidential communications, hopeful views and expectancies, suggestions of public profit ; yes, and of private profit. There must be argument where argument is best, a promise of voters where those are needed, and something on the nail where that has to be. Of course, no one expects you to bother with scrip and greenbacks. Give me the names and

probable amounts, and I will see to the settlements. We must not be nice, and we must not be stingy. The directors don't expect to get much work for nothing. Carpet-baggers, etc., must live, as well as other men."

"And you really think we will have to allow some dirty jobbery?" groaned Wesley, staring weakly at the secretary. He had hitherto proudly imagined himself a man of immense moral muscle; but he felt very feeble as he gazed into the depths of those intelligent eyes, and into the mazes of that sardonic smile.

"What is the other company allowing? The other company must be beaten. You have heard of the necessity of fighting fire with fire."

"I should think a lady might push some of these inquiries with advantage," sighed the honourable, looking about him for somebody to hold the hottest end of his poker.

"I will send you half-a-dozen," said the Other Fellow, the scoff of his smile softening into mocking hilarity. "Dear, lovely, innocent creatures! There is nothing like an Eve for a tempter."

Even the troubled senator could not help grinning for a moment. He had been sorely and also amusingly beset by apple-offering Eves during his term in the Eden of state-craft.

"Well, it must be done, and it will be done!" he declared, much cheered by this hope of help from guardian angels.

"I trust so; no reasonable doubt of it," replied the visitor. "And now as to your personal affairs? Has everything been cleared up?"

"Everything. I don't know why I shouldn't be perfectly jolly. Only a bachelor is apt to be lonely, I suppose you know. I shall have to set up either a wife or a valet."

"Both are procurable. I should recommend the valet, as being the least trouble."

"Exactly. Yes, I want a valet, or rather a man of all work : a fellow who can cook as well as shave and brush clothes ; a fellow who can do a lot of things," insisted the senator, feeling a grim need of distractions. "Yes, I want a valet—a Frenchified sort of valet."

"So I have understood," said the Other Fellow.

Mr. Wesley stared. How had the man understood it? Not heretofore from the senatorial lips, certainly.

"And I have taken the liberty to bring you just the person" continued the secretary: "a man who can shave, make a *vol-au-vent*, do anything. He is waiting in the hall below."

The senator did not want to say, "Call him up," but somehow or other, he could not help saying it. Thereupon appeared, gently stepping and obsequious, a tall, brown, grave man of uncertain age, glossily black in hair and duskily black in eyes, and clothed, like the secretary, in black from head to foot. His name, he said, was Blasorious, his parentage Transylvanian, and his native language Latin. But he spoke English without hesitation or foreign accent, and professed besides a knowledge of several other vulgar tongues.

"I don't know about hiring a college professor," remarked the senator, somewhat daunted by so much learning, and moreover instinctively afraid of this sable Blasorious.

"I only profess couriership," meekly bowed the linguist. "I am merely a courier, glad to turn valet. I shall be humbly thankful to enter your service, sir."

The senator did not want him. He looked from the black suit of the courier to the black suit of the railroad secretary. It seemed to him that there was a dark and wizard conspiracy between these two sombre costumes. But all the same, and for reasons which he could not formulate, he engaged Blasorious.

Then the interview terminated, and the honourable Wesley presently retired to rest, if rest he could find in those days.

In the morning, thanks to Transylvanian cookery, he had a most delicious breakfast. There was, to be sure, one ugly moment. It was when Blasorious removed the covers, and the senator, looking up at his dusky eyes, seemed to see sparks issuing from them, followed by a very little smoke. For a breath he half expected that blue flames and an odour of sulphur would arise from the dishes. But the exquisite flavour of the breakfast made amends for that instant of disagreeable foreboding. There never had been, to his knowledge, such ambrosial *café au lait*, such a *biftec aux pommes*, such a *galantine de volaille*, such a bottle of sauterne. Wesley went up to the senate hall in high spirits, and fought (confidentially) for the Great Consolidated like a Trojan.

In the evening an equally wonderful dinner, all French and strange and exquisite, restored his jaded powers. Only there was Blasorious glooming over the table like an Afreet, and sparkling and smoking altogether too much out of his awful eyes. The senator

began to call him (quite to himself at first) "Blazes." He thought seriously of discharging him, in spite of his unparalleled cookery and handiness. But there were reasons against that ; he never quite understood what they were, only that they were sufficient. One act of independence, however, he did allow himself : he decided that he would not revel in the company of Blazes alone. It became his habit, in these opulent days, to invite a friend or so to dinner, and frequently to breakfast. And of these guests, by the way, the secretary was never one. *He* was only another Blazes, even more distasteful than the Transylvanian himself, and not to be seen on any account except under stress of necessity.

We must not forget, in these scenes of affluence and festivity, the bill of the Great Consolidated. We lack, it is true, the space and the necessary familiarity with affairs of statesmanship to speak of it as fully as it deserves. But we can say that it prospered, thanks to the eloquence (confidential) of our senator, and to the outspoken, manly, noble utterances of patriots who saw the need of just such a measure. It went smoothly from stage to stage ; it was read a first time, a second time, and, for aught I know, a tenth time ; it throve in a style fit to gladden the heart of a nation. Not understanding the minutiae of all this success, we had better thus record it in one satisfactory lump.

But the senator had to work hard to secure his triumph. He had to buttonhole in the halls, and to beckon into the cloak-room, and to circulate from desk to desk, and to dine and wine at his lodgings, not a little. He had to see a great deal of certain ladies who saw a

great deal of certain honourables. It was all very trying to him until he met Mrs. Wilhelmina Norman, the pretty young widow of an army officer, left on the world with only a four-hundred dollar pension, and driven thereby to take such gleanings of labour as might be dropped in her way by careless mankind. She was a lobbyess, alas, but a very interesting one, and also very pitiful—Mr. Wesley did not divine how interesting and pitiful until one day, after a private and strictly business interview with her, he noted that her delicate blonde face was pale and weary, and that her blue eyes had the humble pathos of eyes which have recently wept.

“What is the matter, Mrs. Norman?” he inquired, with great gentleness, for she put him in mind of a sister whom he had lost—lost out of the world. “I am afraid you are over-working on our account. Are you ill?”

The voice of compassion sapped the barriers of womanly reserve, and tears flowed in spite of a struggle to bar them, though they flowed silently. Oh, the sensibility to pity and tenderness of a woman from whom a great love has been withdrawn, leaving her alone in life.

“Ah, my dear lady,” said the senator, with compunction, “I have done harm instead of good! I beg your pardon.”

Little by little the story of her grief, or rather of a single one of many griefs, came out. She had been treated with an impertinence, which she would not describe, by a man so great that she hardly dared murmur his name.

“And it is all because I am in this business!” she sobbed, hysterically. “Oh, I hate it! I hate it!”

The senator was not a good man himself, but he reddened with wrath over the tale. Yet what could he do? The influential personage in question could not be punished, and must not even be affronted. Nor could poor, pretty Mrs. Norman be spared from her thorny but all-important labours. The bill, the priceless bill of the Great Consolidated, was at stake.

"Ah, my dear lady," he groaned, "I pity you! It is a horrid shame. You are too good for this work. But that is just it. It is your very innocence, and freshness, and modesty that make you strong here. These men are used to brazen women, and are little influenced by them. But you—just because you are a lady in demeanour and soul—you are potent. You are the mightiest of all our helpers. I will see that you are well rewarded for your trouble—yes, and your troubles. Don't abandon us."

The result of this interview, or rather the result of the senator's compassion and gentleness, was that Mrs. Norman believed him to be one of the best of men, and gave him her simple confidence and worship. And because she did that, and because he became aware of it, he began to put her higher in his soul than all other women.

If Wesley could in these days have seen only Mrs. Norman, or even only his comparatively tough and unsympathetic table intimates, he would have been, on the whole, a comfortably minded legislator, in spite of his hated labours for the Great Consolidated. But there, at every meal, indeed haunting his lodgings at all hours, was that infernal, smoky-eyed Afreet of a Blasorious. There, too, dropping in every evening, was that sable-

suited, sardonic secretary, the most potent and intimidating sprite of the two. By the way it was impossible for him to justify to himself or to anybody else the singular fear in which he held these two beings. They did not seem to produce any special impression upon his habitual guests or his chance visitors. He felt tolerably sure of this, for he watched anxiously to see. From time to time, moreover, he would sound people on the subject.

"Odd-looking fellow, that valet of mine," he observed to paunchy, crimson-wattled Judge Mulberry, taking good care, of course, that Blazes was out of hearing.

"Yes, rather ; what is he ?" gobbled Mulberry, pitching into the *perdreau truffé* at a tremendous rate.

"A Transylvanian. Speaks Latin as his mother tongue."

"Bless my soul !" stared Mulberry. "By Jove, I'd keep a Latin professor of cookery myself, if I could afford it. Wesley, you ain't going to send off that partridge yet, are you ? The next dish can't be half so good."

"But have you ever remarked his eyes ?" inquired the senator, helping the judge to the remaining *perdreau*. "I half think the man is a gipsy."

"What's the matter with his eyes ?" mumbles Mulberry, his great mouth full of partridge and truffles.

"Why, really, I hardly know," stammers Wesley. "Perhaps it's the expression : something like sparks, you know, followed by smoke."

Mulberry's own eyes (which certainly had no sparks nor smoke in them, being altogether too watery) were lifted in astonished inquiry to his entertainer's face.

"Look here, Wesley!" he warned, in a stertorious voice, "you'd better look out for yourself. Your nerves are getting out of order. A number of men have remarked it. Come, now, shove that burgundy over here, and ring in your next course and go at it like a man."

"Ah—well," sighed the senator *incompris*, tinkling his solid silver bell (chased with the figures and names of the four evangelists), and then averting his eyes from the door, so that he might not see the entering Blasorious.

The rest of his dinner passed in something like a great sandy desert of thirst. Mulberry drank everything on the table, except water, and really risked going home tipsy, all to spare his friend's nerves. Then, still out of pure kindness, he hiccoughed, "Wesley, my boy, let's go to the theatre and see the ballet."

"Very good," agreed the senator. "Anything to get away from that confounded Blazes!"

"What! your man?" stared Mulberry. "If you don't like him, why don't you ship him?"

The unhappy president of the Great Consolidated made no reply. It was impossible to explain to his friend, and, in fact, it was impossible to explain to himself, why there was no possibility of turning off Blasorious.

"I didn't mean Blazes," he stammered. "I was thinking of that Other Fellow; I mean that confounded secretary. He is here nearly every evening."

"Oh, I dare say! Business out of hours be hanged! I never attend to anything after session."

"And then he is such a disagreeable chap!" continued Wesley, plaintively.

"Disagreeable?" dissented Mulberry. "I don't find him so. One of the most gentlemanly, entertaining, bright fellows that I have ever met. I'd like to have him along."

The senator did not take up the question. If he had gone into it, and had stated what he suspected as to the secretary, or even what he had plainly discerned in him, Mulberry would simply have pooh-poohed at it all, and advised him, with his burgundied breath, to take care of his nerves.

"Staggering old crapulence!" he said to himself, looking askant at his wheezing, heavy-footed friend. "He has three bottles in him this very minute, and preaches austerities and macerations to me."

At this moment Blasorious entered, and said, in his bass-drum voice and excellent English, "Gentlemen, the carriage is ready."

"What!" exclaimed Wesley, in downright terror, remembering that he had not ordered a carriage.

"That's all right, Blazes," put in the undisturbed Mulberry, as little surprised as three bottles of wine need be. "You are the softest-footed and quickest-witted man in your line of life that I ever saw. There's a dollar for you. I wish it were a hundred."

Blasorious thanked him in grateful double-bass, and pocketed the gratuity in the most commonplace fashion, as if he had been any ordinary domestic.

They now went out to the carriage, the judge bunting against the senator several times during the brief journey, and meanwhile lecturing him on the perils of the jovial bowl.

"What are you staring at, Wesley?" he demanded, when they reached the pavement.

"I wanted to see who that was on the box," explained the senator, with the air of a man who is not yet quite free of suspicions.

"Why, it's the coachman, of course!" grumbled and gasped Mulberry, as he struggled into the vehicle with the aid of Blasorious. "Hang these Washington carriages! Their doors remind me of the eye of the scriptural needle. Only an anaconda can twist into one without scraping his coat-tails off. What are you craning out of the window for, Wesley?"

"Who was that got on to the box?" asked the senator, actually trembling with terror. "I'm sure that somebody got on to the box."

"Let him, and let him stay there!" puffed the judge. "No room for him inside, after we're in. I dare say it's some bosom friend of the nigger—or perhaps an applicant after your signature."

"Oh, it's that infernal Blazes!" groaned Wesley. "What is he following *me* for?"

"Going to spend that dollar on a ticket, probably. But why shouldn't he attend us? We shall want him to help us out, with all this blubber and burgundy aboard."

"Oh, well, it's all right," sighed the senator, wearied of his comrade's stupidity, and attributing it to the three bottles. "I don't care so much for *him*. I was afraid it was the Other Fellow."

"Well, I wasn't," said the judge, and chuckled a good deal over his own wit, which, by the way, seemed rather vapoury to him next morning.

It is not necessary to describe the stale marvels of the theatre. One can perhaps best give an idea of the entertainment by stating that Judge Mulberry went fast asleep in his box, and snored out a whole wine cellar of opinions, while the senator passed his time in anxiously watching the audience to see if he could discern the dreaded visage of the Other Fellow. It was surely not a pleasant life that he was leading. I hardly know which he liked least—his yesterdays, or his to-days, or his to-morrows. And yet he was flush of money, and potent in great affairs, and high in dignity ; he was an object of jealousy to more than one stronger man, and of envy to many a happier one.

Perhaps his health was shaken a little, though he would not admit it. He certainly did not look quite well—not as well as a few days previous, when he was “poor, but honest.” He was as broad and muscular as ever, but there were haggard lines on his countenance, and there was an anxious expression in his eyes. His doctor, old Wedderburne, met him, stopped him, stared at him, and said, “Working too hard, ain’t you? Do you sleep well?”

“Now look here!” protested the senator peevishly, “I suppose Mulberry has been talking to you about me, confound him!”

The doctor said, “No,” but Wesley didn’t believe him. He was quite confident in these days that this man and that one and the other one talked about him, and always to his disadvantage.

“Oh, I know Judge Mulberry!” he laughed excitedly. , He’s a babbling old busybody. He’s been spreading a

report that my nerves are shaky. A man always says that of his friend when his own hide is as full as a Spanish wine-skin."

Old Wedderburne roared, rubbed his hands prodigiously over the joke, and kept on studying the senator out of the corners of his wrinkled eyes.

"Very good on Mulberry," he giggled. "I shall have to tell him that. By the way, Wesley, don't you really need a little stimulus?"

"Well, perhaps I do," conceded the senator. "I *am* taking something."

"Yes—what?" asked the doctor. "That's the main point. What *kind* of stuff is it?"

Little by little Wesley confessed to light potations of various *good* wines, with a glass of brandy and water now and then, or possibly whisky instead.

"Too much variety," gently commented old Wedderburne. "Mixing drinks in that way won't do. You'll spoil your stomach next, and then you won't sleep. Which one of all these things suit you best?"

"I—I think whisky—good old Bourbon."

"Then stick to plain whisky, senator. Try that,—just for a while, you know,—and put a little quinine in it. You know our air,—very malarious. Good morning."

"Confound these doctors!" muttered the senator, as he hastily walked off in the opposite direction, though he was going nowhere in particular. "Always hinting that a fellow is an interesting case! However, I'll try the whisky,—yes, and the quinine. Does he want to gag me down to a thimbleful? What does Mulberry go talking about me for! What does he know about it! If he

were in my place, and saw the people I have to see, he would get into a hogshead of mixed drinks and live there."

Turning a corner, he stumbled upon Blasorious, marching along with a cigar box under his arm, all with the most commonplace air possible. How can even a superior man endure such encounters with equanimity and patience? For a moment the senator forgot his terrors in his rage, and broke out upon the valet like an indignant lion.

"What do you mean, sir?" he demanded. "I want to know, once for all, what is the purpose of this behaviour!"

"I was carrying home these regalias, sir," replied Blazes, apparently much dismayed, as well as astonished. "You sent me for them, sir."

"That's all right," quavered and choked the senator. "But that isn't what I'm talking about. *You* know as well as *I* do. What are your eyes so infernally black for? And what makes you sparkle them so?"

If Blasorious were an imp of any sort, he was certainly a timorous one, or else he had a knack of counterfeiting timidity. Looking more surprised than ever, and also more alarmed, he stammered out, "A great many people in my country have black eyes, sir. I didn't know that I sparkled them."

"They sparkle like Tophet!" declared the senator. "And that isn't the worst of it; you make smoke come out of them."

Blasorious, apparently in utter confusion of mind, rubbed his optics with the back of his hand.

"Oh, that's the way you stop it, is it?" stared Wesley.

"Well, now, don't let's have any more of it. Carry the cigars home. And look here! let me have quinine and whisky for dinner, or I'll know the reason why."

Blasorious, who had probably never before heard of such a table drink, gave him so broad a stare that the senator trembled even in his moment of victory, and was glad to turn away.

"There he goes, blazing and smoking again!" he muttered. "One of us two will burn up some day. But I'll talk to him about it. I *will* speak. I'm not going to be flamed at and vapoured at in silence. And I'll speak to the Other Fellow too. I don't care what he is. I'll say my say about these things, if I *am* nothing but a human being."

That evening the secretary of the Great Consolidated called on him to discuss the chances of the bill. He was as clear, as business-like, as clever, and, one might say as epigrammatic as usual.

"Everything has been done that a corporation can do," he said. "I believe that you have done everything that a senator can do. Nothing is left but prophecy. Shall we win?"

"How can I tell?" grumbled Wesley, who had resolved, as we know, on some sort of rebellion against—one hardly knows what. "Why do you expect *me* to prophesy?"

"When a man can't see through the veil himself, it is a relief to get another man to pretend to see through it," smiled the secretary.

"Look here, now, I'm tired of this," protested the senator, though with less pluck than he had hoped to

muster. What's the sense of your saying, *We men!* You know what you are, and you know what I know."

"True, in this business, I am not a man,—I am an agent," conceded the Other Fellow, without changing a muscle of his *spirituel* countenance.

"Yes you *are* an agent,—a devil of an agent!" said Wesley, turning pale. "Then, what do you talk about being a man for? I call it hypocrisy, I do. I don't like it."

"Oh, I have certain claims to the character," the secretary continued to smile, though he looked a little surprised,—perhaps at being detected, the senator thought. "I have my human motives and objects. I want to accumulate property for the sake of—well, its influence. That is passably human."

"Property! influence! My gracious, how little I seem to care about those things now!" groaned Wesley. "A week ago I was mad to be mighty and rich. And here I am both, and I don't care. What is wealth? A delusion!"

"Almost the only real property that we have is the yesterday which we enjoyed and haven't yet forgotten," philosophized the Other Fellow.

"Did you enjoy your yesterday?" sternly asked the senator. The poor, bewildered, horrified man was thinking of indefinite periods passed amid wailings and gnashings of teeth.

"It wouldn't seem very fine to a United States senator."

"How would it seem to a senator of hell?"

It appeared to Wesley that he had the fellow there. But the secretary merely smiled, lit another of the corporation cigars, and replied, "Senator, you are a deeper

man than I even supposed. I am not accustomed to meet Congressmen who interest themselves in other-world mysteries. Some day I should like to take a drive with you, and compare philosophies and theologies. Just now—well, I must get back to the office. Good night to you.”

Office! *Where* was his office? Where did the hypocritical wretch pass his nights? Our poor friend Wesley believed that it was deep under ground.

Really, it must be very uncomfortable to have familiar acquaintance with a demon or two, though ever so high-toned in their demeanour, and courteous in their approaches, and instructive in their conversation. Just think of such an Avernian couple, free to drop in upon you at any moment; shedding a faint scent of brimstone through your rooms in spite of all their eau de Cologne; sparkling and smoking occasionally out of their too brilliant and expressive eyes; taking an interest in your temporal welfare, which makes you tremble all the more for your futurities; and treating your natural fretfulness with the composed urbanity of a cat playing with a disabled mouse! It is my belief that no man who finds himself delivered to such company can be otherwise than extremely miserable.

In these distresses the senator went much for comfort, as troubled men do go, to a woman. Under immense grief we often forget to cry for help, and long mainly for sympathy. When we most keenly feel that we are failures, then do we most need the presence of a worshipper. In poor little Mrs. Norman, who knew well what pangs there are in sorrow, the afflicted senator found one who could divine and could soothe. More-

over, she bowed before him ; she undisguisedly looked up to him as the greatest man of her acquaintance, if not of her era ; to him, the consciously fallen and prostrate, she offered the fragrant incense and sweet sacrifice of adoration.

To a Congressman who is utterly cast down and bruised in spirit, there may be something inexpressibly soothing and precious in the love of a female lobbyist. And that consolation—altogether ineffective practically, but still brimming full of mercies—was the possession of our harassed senator.

“I wish you were well,” the fair, gentle little lady said to him. “If you were only well, you would be happy. You are so able, so influential, so successful ! If you could get rid of this—this something that prays on your strength, you would be perfectly contented and cheerful. Don’t you know that you would ?” she insisted, with that pretty smile of mingled authority and propitiation which is characteristic of the woman who has been married.

The senator was so attracted by the smile that he answered tenderly, “I should still lack one thing to perfect happiness.”

Mrs. Norman half-divined his meaning, and a rose or two bloomed in her cheek. But he did not continue in this happy, pastoral strain. Of a sudden, the flood of his troubles rolled back upon him, and he began to talk, or rather babble, about them, in the broken fashion of one who speaks out of a nightmare.

“But, Mrs. Norman, I can’t get well, as you call it. You don’t know my—my complaint. It is one that people

don't cure of. Nonsense! I am well enough. It isn't health that I want. It is ease——"

"What?" whispered the lady, full of eagerness to know and to console.

"Persecution," he dared to explain. "I am followed and watched," he added, looking about him. "There is a conspiracy. Oh, it is useless to talk,—useless to tell you this. You can't help. For Heaven's sake, don't repeat this!"

But Mrs. Norman must talk. "Followed?" she inquired. "Why don't you inform the police? How dare anybody conspire against a United States senator! *Do* let me talk about it. Perhaps I can advise, woman as I am."

It overjoyed her to think, or hope, that perhaps she could help him. The emotion sent new roses into her delicate cheeks, and a liquid radiance into her blue eyes, making her momentarily beautiful. The senator, deeply touched and interested, leaned forward, and seized her slender hand, and imprinted on it a kiss of gratitude, near akin to love. Then, seeing he had greatly agitated her, he said, "Forgive me. I could not help thanking you at once. You shall know some day how much I respect and prize you."

Mrs. Norman's breath came so thick that for twenty seconds she could not speak; and during that brief interval the sombre flood once more rolled over the senator's head.

"Ah, there are too many of them!" he groaned. "At first there was one; then only two; but now there are half a dozen. The police!" he scoffed. "what could the police do? If we had archangels for police, to be

sure! But I don't know of any angels in Washington. I don't believe one has been here these twenty years—except you, Mrs. Norman."

"And I am a lobbyist," she laughed, seeking to turn all into a joke, and so distract him from his troubles.

"There are worse people than lobbyists," he said, grimly, "and some of them are United States senators. No wonder I am followed and compassed about with a great cloud of—oh, such witnesses!"

Glancing here, with an air of fixed horror, at one end of her tiny parlour, he rose suddenly and hurried away, scarcely muttering a good night. Running to her window, she presently saw him walking rapidly down the street, occasionally looking over his shoulder. Then, before seeking her rest, she knelt down and sobbed a prayer for him.

The senator had told the truth in his sad confessions to the only being for whom he now cared. During the last twenty-four hours the creatures who haunted and harassed him had increased in numbers and waxed mighty in power of torment. Besides the secretary and Blasorious, there were other black-vestured personages who seemed to have the right to follow him everywhere, walking close behind him in the streets, sitting opposite him in the street-cars, and even intruding among the sacred arm-chairs of the senate-chamber. Often and often he wondered what his fellow-members and fellow-citizens thought of seeing him attended by such a sombre committee. "Will it be supposed," he said to himself, with a desperate laugh, "that I am running for the presidency of Tophet?"

On the morning after the above interview with Mrs. Norman, while he was making his last appeals (confidential) to his fellow conscript fathers in favour of the bill, one of these fuliginous gentlemen attended him at every step, whispering the keenest suggestions and the aptest phrases. It is impossible to describe his horror at this dark proximity, or his wonder at the wicked cleverness of these assistances. How glad he would have been to get rid of the creature, and yet how poorly he would have argued without him ! In vain did he shake his head, wave his hand majestically, and mutter, "Go out of the cloak-room !" The agent—or whatever we ought to call him—seemed to know that he was privileged, and would not depart. And, what was strangest of all to Wesley, he could not perceive that other senators objected to the fellow's presence, or appeared in the least surprised at it.

The bill passed. With all this marvellous lobbying, how could it help passing ? It went to the House, and Senator Wesley went with it, and the dusky agent also. There likewise it passed, and without debate. It was as good as law. The corporation of the Great Consolidated rejoiced in all its members, from the sprucest white-cravated director down to the greasiest oiler of axles.

But did the successful and now opulent president share in the wide-spread gratulation ? He hastened away from the scene of his triumph with the air of a rogue who believes himself followed by detectives. Seeing the secretary—that awful Other Fellow—approaching him with a smile of congratulation, he actually dodged down a side hall, and ran away from him, his face wearing an expression of horror which passers-by never forgot.

Reaching the city, he entered a lawyer's office, and made his will, down to the very witnessing and sealing. His whole estate, one is agreeably surprised to learn, he left to Mrs. Wilhelmina Norman.

Next, he stepped in at old Wedderburne's office, not so much because he thought himself in need of medical care as because he wanted to shake off a tall man in black velvet, who followed him persistently.

"Well, Wesley, how are you to-day?" asked the doctor, staring at him with rather an unpleasant fixedness.

The senator leaned forward, and replied in an agitated whisper, "Is that fellow a friend of yours?"

"Which fellow?" murmured Wedderburne, without even turning to look in the direction indicated.

"Why, good Lord! this foreigner here; this chap in the opera costume,—long feather in his cap."

"Speak out, senator," said the doctor, cheeringly. "You needn't restrain yourself on his account. There's no harm in the poor, silly fellow, and I don't think he understands English."

"And there's his infernal dog!" groaned Wesley, with unalloyed terror. "That infernal, big, black brute of a dog! By Jove, it's Mephistopheles! No, it isn't; it's Blazes. It's Mephistopheles and Blazes in one. Doctor, I always suspected it."

He said this with such an agony of conviction and horror that the seasoned old physician felt tears of pity come into his eyes.

"Now, look here, my dear friend, don't be worried," he said, "There's no harm in these chaps. Plenty of men have seen them, and haven't been hurt by them.

Don't get agitated about a simpleton in fancy ball costume. I know how to manage these jokers."

"But what are you going to do with him?" pleaded the trembling senator. "There he stands, the infernal scoundrel, waiting for me. And there are more of them in the street. Don't you hear them? They've been calling after me all the way from the Capitol."

"Let them call," said Wedderburne. "You are too tired to attend to their nonsense now. You are worn out, senator, with this incessant work. What you want is sleep."

"Sleep! I can't sleep. Give me some whisky, doctor. Perhaps I could sleep on your sofa, if I had some whisky."

"Try a little chloral first. The whisky can wait."

With much difficulty the doctor persuaded his patient to take a dose of chloral, and then gently led him home. Blasorious opened the door, and the senator uttered a shriek. Wedderburne whispered some errand to the valet, and the latter hurried away at his usual speedy pace.

"You see I can manage these fellows," nodded the doctor. "Now, come up-stairs with me. I'll put you to bed, and sit up with you."

But the senator could not sleep. "Where is the whisky?" he begged. "I can't shut my eyes without it."

At last a wine-glass of liquor was given him, strongly dosed with bromide of potassium.

Now came a dolorous struggle between the strength of the medicine and the strength of the possession. The senator tossed and tumbled for hours, cursing his haunting

tormentors, striving to rise and fly from them, praying piteously for strong drink, and then again cursing or weeping. Eventually he fell into a succession of short dozes, from which he started up screaming with terror. After each waking the doctor gave him beef tea, or other small doses of nourishment. But still the persecutors came, and the immense horror continued. The room swarmed with men in black costume, attended by huge black dogs or indescribable monsters. The personage whom Wesley chiefly dreaded, however, was the secretary of the great railroad corporation, or, as he constantly called him, the Other Fellow.

"Don't let him in!" he implored. "Don't let him come near me! He brought all the others. He commands them. They only want to carry me away because he bids them. There! don't you see him sitting in the window? He wants me to jump out with him." Then, after a long pause, addressing the tempter, "Jump out yourself, if you like it!"

"That's right," observed the doctor, almost smiling. "That's the way to treat those fellows. Now try a little more beef tea, Wesley, and then take another nap."

There was a slumber now which seemed likely to last. The doctor leaned back in his chair, watched his patient with eyes of satisfaction, and smiled like a seraph. He believed, with the great joy of a physician in such moments, that he had beaten a terrible malady. Five minutes later, Judge Mulberry softly entered the room, and whispered to him that Mrs. Wedderburne had been taken seriously ill.

"How can I leave this man?" gasped the doctor. "You know what has got him."

"Oh, I know,—expected it," said the judge. "Go and look to your wife, and come back here. I'll see to Wesley."

But the judge was elderly, and had dined copiously. After a time—he never knew how long—he awoke from a refreshing nap, and found his patient gone.

The next that was known of the senator he knocked gently about ten in the evening, at the door of Mrs. Norman's parlour. He was dressed with unusual care, and there was a pleasant smile on his face.

"Why, Mr. Wesley!" she exclaimed, delighted to see him, late as it was. "Come in. How well and gay you are looking! Success suits you, doesn't it now?"

"Yes, I am very well and very happy," he replied, gazing about him with a rapt expression, as though the air were full of ravishing sights. "And I am all the happier for not being too late to see you, my dear lady."

A sweet illusion had come over the terrible judgment which afflicted this unhappy misdoer. It is possible enough that for him, as for other men who have been in his lamentable case, the figures of demons and tormentors had changed delusively into shapes of celestial sweetness and brightness, perhaps playing on those golden harps which Bunyan heard ringing from the walls of the heavenly city.

"I am perfectly happy," he repeated, still smiling. "I should say that the air was full of fairies,—lovely fairies. And you are the loveliest of them all."

She laughed heartily, and also blushed heartily, as she was wont to do. She had not a suspicion but that he

was speaking with jocose exaggeration, and talking of fairies figuratively, meaning thereby pleasant thoughts, or triumphant hopes.

"And now, my dear child, I have one simple thing to say to you," he added, fixing his eyes upon her with indescribable longing and tenderness. "I have learned to admire you and love you. Will you be my wife?"

All unknowing that this was a voice out of the land of shadows and great darkness, she leaned forward in obedience to its irresistible summons, and lay upon his heart. He put his arm around her, drew her firmly against his breast, and kissed her once. Then, of a sudden, he started; his face assumed an expression of unutterable aversion and horror; he stared at her neck as if he saw it twined with deadly reptiles.

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed, pushing her from him. "And *you*, too!"

In the next moment he had reached an open window, and disappeared through it with a loud cry.

Mrs. Norman shrieked also, but she did not faint. In one minute she had rushed down three stories and reached the granite pavement below. There she saw Blasorious lifting up the body of her lover, and gazing with a fixed, dusky stare into his lifeless eyes, while from a carriage which halted at that moment came a darkly-attired personage, whom she recognized as the secretary.

"Is he dead?" she asked a dozen times, with loud sobs and gaspings, while they lifted the suicide into the vehicle. "Oh, what made him do it?"

"An overworked brain," whispered the secretary out of the window, "is what we shall have to say. Drive on!"



Half-May.

By HENRY S. LEIGH.



MY heart—my hand—my life—my all—with
rapture I surrender'd :
My worldly goods, though very small, with
tender vow I tender'd.
My hopes were easy to deceive; too late
I see it clearly.—
She rather loved me, I believe; she never
loved me dearly.

By heaps of amatory rhymes I proved that I adored her ;
And, in the olden happy times, they hardly ever bored her.
My happiness I thought secure ; I wooed her so sincerely.—
She rather loved me, I am sure ; she never loved me dearly.

Across the meadow, side by side, how oft we went a-
roaming,
In merry May, at eventide—*poeticé*, the “gloaming.”
We talked, as other folks may do, about the weather
merely.—
She rather loved me, it is true ; she never loved me dearly.

But, when my passion held the sway, my gifts of conversation

Were exercised in such a way as challenged emulation.

Alas! my wisdom and my wit were wasted very nearly.—

She rather loved me, I admit ; she never loved me dearly.

A day appeared—ah, bitter day! on which there came
another;

And, in a free and easy way, she bade him “ask her mother.”

I can't complain, for girls will act full often very queerly.—

She rather loved me, that's a fact ; she never loved me dearly.





A Widsommer Night's Scream;

OR, THE COUNT DE QUIXO MIXO'S DREAM.

By J. GOMPERTZ MONTEFIORE.



THE Count de Quixo Mixo was an author of renown, and wrote for all the "fashionable" journals in the town; contributing the "Scandalettes" (as many victims knew) to that charitable "Weekly" called *The Billingsgate Review*. His grammar was from "Murray" culled: his composition neat; while to read his "Scorpion Slashers" was a most refreshing treat. His language was *within the law*—his scorn like thunder fell; and, what was more, the Count knew (pretty fairly) *how to spell!* To scarify a social wrong his pen was never lax; and he knew the whole of Latin, from *Vobiscum* up to *Pax!* And if he'd hostile critics, he could well afford to flout 'em, though authors of the second-class *can hardly do without 'em!* But now, just at the juncture we have chosen for this tale, the Count's prestige in Grub Street circles seemed about to *fail*.

He had to write a Christmas book for *Mistletoe and Holly*—rather funny, rather sorry, rather ghostly, rather jolly. But, somehow, all his pristine skill forsook his harassed brain, and he wasted fourteen quires of “draft” and twenty quills—in vain.

“Alas!” he cried, “my art is gone—my memory deficient; and this when just a *touch* of ghosts alone had been sufficient! Oh, aid me, Muse! and thou, sweet *Punch!*” (for such he then was drinking), “provide me with a SUBJECT, pray!”—and then he fell a-thinking.

From thinking he fell musing; and from musing into *Sleep* is a natural transition, neither curious nor deep. And while he slept, he dreamt that he was in the British Navy, and mutinied because his “junk” had far too little *gravy!* But, just as they were hanging him, regardless of his *choak*, the Count de Quixo Mixo, very happily, awoke.

And by his lonely couch there stood a disconcerting ghost, in the semblance of a damsel fair enough to form a toast.

Her dress was Westbourne Grove-y, and her bonnet was unique, representing, as it did, the latest millineering freak—a complete Dessert of costly fruit served up on golden feathers, watched over by a painted sparrow, ready for all *weathers!* Her cheeks were of a colour quite impossible to tell, for, in truth, this ghostly demoiselle was what they call a *Belle*. Her gloves were not extravagant (they only had twelve buttons), while her shoes were—ah, well, never mind—*revenons à nos “muttons!”*

“What do you here?” the Count exclaimed, while shudders racked his bones; “I beg that you will tell your tale in words instead of groans—”

"I've come," the spectre slowly said, "to help you in your strait, and to tell you *what to write about*, before it be too late. You have to write a Christmas tale; but, though your best you try, you cannot find a subject:—Well, that same I can supply."

"Indeed!" quoth Quixo Mixo, "if you can, you'll have my thanks; but I trust it's not the usual thing—BRIMSTONE, CREEPS, and CLANKS?"

"Of course it's not!" the Ghost replied, and quite severely frowned; "the theme to suit a mortal pen in mortal realms is found. Now, *I'm* the pet of WESTBOURNE GROVE—(the female pet, I mean: the *beau* of that locality, no doubt, you oft have seen?)—and my object is to find a Grub Street author so defiant as to put his pen to *anything*, just as suits his client. I now choose *you*, great Quixo, to avenge my earthly grief, by abusing *Madame Billorteux*, that millineering thief!

"Last year she made a dress for me: I gave her all the stuff! but though I sent her forty yards, she said 'twas '*not enough!*' and then (her tearful eyes with *calculation* over-brimming)—'I really couldn't stand a lady buying her own trimming!' And so she bought one hundred yards (I paid for that, at least) of a sort of spangled *something* much in fashion—in the East.

"She 'tried' the dress a score of times (and always came at dinner); and sometimes said I grew 'too fat,' and sometimes, 'Pray, grow thinner!' But when she felt convinced that she had got my proper measure, she took the dress away, and said she'd *finish it at leisure!*

"I never saw it more; nor was the *stuff* returned to me; the BILL of thirty guineas odd was all she let me see;

and though my father settled *it*, he also settled *me*, and, very shortly after, *I became the ghost you see!* Now, I want you, as an author, to well ventilate such matters, and with your trenchant satire tear that milliner to tatters! You could not have a better theme; don't say your brains are banished—I have given you a subject: *write upon it!*”—and she vanished.

* * * * *

The Count de Quixo Mixo, much relieved to be alone, tried to go to sleep once more, when—

Goodness gracious! what a groan!

* * * * *

a groan the like of which the Count had never heard before; while, to make the matter worse, it came from *his* side of the door; for when a groan, apparently, is wrung from twenty *tabbies*, who have just that very minute scratched the arms of forty *babbies*, who were sweetly watching sixty strong *sawfilers* ply their trade, to the great disgust of eighty *lions* (not a bit afraid though a hundred healthy elephants are practising a roar)—*then*, perhaps, 'tis quite as soothing if performed *outside* the door!

The Count de Quixo Mixo (quite devoid of childish fears), had the hardihood at once *to put his fingers in his ears*; but his courage served him little, for beside his couch there stood A BEAUTY OF THE OLDEN TIME, in not the sweetest mood.

She hardly waited for the questions Quixo Mixo put—viz., “Who are you and what d'ye want?”—but fiercely stamped her foot.



"A Beauty of the Olden Time, in not the sweetest mood."—Page 110

"You say you want a 'subject' for your story?—here it is :—

"WHY WASN'T I INSERTED IN THE BEAUTY-LIST OF 'QUIZZ'?"

"Just tell me *that*, you author, you! You write for *Folly Fair*?—Why wasn't *I* belauded from my shoelets to my hair?"

"My locks, I *think*, are 'Radiant'? my figure is Divine'? my nose, if not *retroussé*, still is *piquant*, I opine? D'ye mean to say my eyes are weak?—No!—*fawn-like*, if you please; and my 'movements' are replete with stylish elegance and ease? I *think* that when I smile I joy, and when I frown I murder?—they say I lack *esprit*—Ha ha! now what can be absurder? My enemies have said, too, that I cannot 'flirt' a fan: I trust I'm not despised for *that*—considering I *CAN*?"

"Why, has not all the Park gone crazy if perchance I've felt too lazy for my morning's canter round the Row, where critics so abound?"

(The Count de Quixo Mixo most politely answered "Yes"; though this second ghost fatigued him not a little, we confess):

"And, if these things are true (as, since I say them, so they are), just tell me if you can, sir—or, more rightly, if you DARE—why my praises were not sounded in the *Folly Fair's* array of that favoured herd of self-sufficient BEAUTIES OF THE DAY?"

"And, while I am about it, I will speak of something more :—*My photograph has not appeared at any public store!* I never see my tinted face, or attitude so languishing, put up for sale at any shop :—I say it's simply

anguishing! And so it is to think that out of envy, spite, and malice, *they never set my face in squibs and crackers at the PALACE!*

"I'm sure my eyes would look quite soft and sleepy *o'er my muff*; and I *know* I could be hired as a

"Photographic Puff!"

"D'ye think I couldn't manage to be taken for an *Actress?*—in highdress, low-dress, ball-dress, fur-dress, tight-dress, loose-dress, *lack-dress?*

"D'ye think the charms of Fireworks, by *me* should ne'er be tasted—and that Rockets, Squibs, and Cath'rine Wheels on *my* face would be wasted?"

"But, madam, if you'll pardon me—your *husband*—"

"—Cease such folly! He *must* enjoy to see my face next that of 'Pet' or 'Polly'?—he *cannot* but delight to think that Jones, and Brown, and Green, his pretty wife in tights or Roman-candles oft has seen!!! It cannot fail to raise his pride whene'er he takes a walk, to see *my* figure in the shops, and hear the shop-boys talk:—'*Now this is Mrs. So-and-So,—just doesn't she look nice? She's quite the Pet of Leicester Square; and—SIXPENCE IS THE PRICE!*'

"How likely to increase his joy and confidence in woman, to hear her 'points,' so well described by ev'ry common showman! How likely 'tis to raise his true respect for her still higher, when of his wife's dear features every *cad* may be a buyer! How likely, too, to make his entertainment go off well, when his wife herself concludes it—as the GREAT SKYROCKET BELLE!!!

"How likely, to the warmth of husband's love, to add sweet fuel tis to *suffer* that which *once had been fit subject for a DUEL!*

"Oh, why was I not HONOURED thus, but left to die unknown!"—and here the hapless beauty gave her soul-distracting groan.

This finished Quixo Mixo, and he started up in bed:—

"Avaunt! you VULGAR CREATURE: GO AWAY!"—*that's* what he said.

With not a blush (!) she disappeared, and left the Count to think how he best could write a Christmas Flight, called

BEAUTY ON THE BRINK!

—When, suddenly, *another* ghost—an ancient dame this time—came gliding to the bedside, and began to moan in rhyme.

"Who are you, and what d'ye want?" (Count Quixo longed to shake her:)

"I'm Madame Bulge, of Conduit Street, the famous HOOP-SKIRT MAKER. You want a theme?—you have it now: *abuse the present dress*; and Madame Bulge and all her heirs your name will ever bless."

"Why, what's amiss with dresses now?"

"Why, what's *a* miss without 'em?"

"You must be more explicit, ma'am; *I* don't know much about 'em."

"You surely see how *tight* they are (the fashion's happily recent), how shamefully—well, really, I might almost say, *indecent*! Just tell me—would you feel inclined to let your wife or daughter display her shape for City apes' *approval*, *scorn*, or *laughter*? Would *you* feel glad to hear it said, while walking with a lady, 'Bill, the figure's not so bad; but, well, the *waist is shady*!'

"Would *you* feel proud to own the belle whose form

makes idle chatter for the snobs of Piccadilly—for your butcher, baker, hatter? Would you feel glad to marry her whose *shape* each low-born critic has oft discussed o'er pots o' beer, with skill *quite analytic*?

"Can MAN rejoice to hear the voice of any common churl passing judgment on the *figure of his wife or modest girl*?

"You lack a 'subject:'—write me up, and write tight dresses down; my *hoops*, if not perfection, still are *modest*—that you'll own? Write gently, though; be not too harsh, nor make your words too strong: just tell the girls, that if they think 'tis *pretty*—they are WRONG!

"By force of TRUTH, destroy the hopes by dress-makers engendered; show maidens that by *modest* dress the sweeter they are rendered!"

"I will!" cried Quixo Mixo, "if you'll only go away, and let me get a little sleep before the break of day. You vengeance-seeking ghosts are so monotonous (excuse me—)"

"I'll leave you, sir, this minute, if my wish you'll not refuse me?"

"I'll think of it."

"(I knew you would!)"

"And then, *perhaps*—"

"(You're very good!)"

"I'll cast about—"

"(Yes, yes, I *knew* it!)" . . .

"—*And find some other man to do it!!*"

With a groan more soul-distracting than mere language can explain, the Spectre died away, and left the Count alone again.

* * * * *

The duration of his solitude was shorter than before: in two minutes, Quixo Mixo heard a rapping at the door; and foreseeing what it was (another ghost, of course), he cried, "Oh, make yourself at home, I beg; don't mind *me*: come inside!"

Obedient to his summons, the intruder now appeared; and this time it was a Gentleman, with whiskers and a beard.

"Who are *you*, and what d'ye want?" (the old familiar question :) "You look as if your sole complaint is *chronic indigestion*!"

"You're right," the Spectre moaned; "'tis true, I'm sick with costly '*feeds*'—with eating twenty times as much as any mortal needs. My wife has had the *honour* to be styled a 'LONDON HOSTESS,' and so, you'll understand, a weekly gorge our daily boast is! We have to give rich dinners, with at least a dozen courses; and, in fact, my pots and pans engulph a third of my resources. The contents of our dishes cannot well be called *extensive*; but a little goes a long way—*when that little is expensive*! (Experience has taught me that to figure well in *print*, a London Hostess only has to take this little hint. For, if she gave a modest meal, a good and wholesome feed, Zounds! *what* an Epitaph her friends in *Folly Fair* would read—

"*'This paragraph is sacred to the memory of One who, by fraud and false pretences, our Praise in Pica won; but we grieve to say her place is now among our Social Sinners, since she Wilfully Persists in giving INEXPENSIVE DINNERS!'*")

"I pity you!" cried Quixo; "but your wife I pity more,

for I know myself that dinner-giving *is* a dreadful bore."

"It is not that," the Ghost replied; "the *bore* I do not mind; it is the *cost* of all the things a 'HOSTESS' has to find. One half the money spent on wine, on *entrées*, and dessert, would fill a pauper's heart with joy, and—*no digestion hurt!* One quarter of the income thrown away to 'make a show,' would cause the wheels of honest toil quite easily to go!—You want a 'subject:' *write on this*—cry down such costly meals, and teach these

'LONDON HOSTESSES'

that

'HUNGER STILL APPEALS'!

"I have spoken:—'tis for you to make some use of what I've said, and to found 'A Tale of Christmas' on '*A Tale of Want of Bread*'!"

The Ghost, with indigestion slowly creeping o'er his face, gave the hollowest of moans, and slowly melted into space.

"He's very right," thought Quixo, "and I've half a mind—but, there!—what on Earth's the good of preaching while they've still their

'FOLLY FAIR?'"

* * * * *

He was startled by the clank of chains, and then, to his surprise, the room was simply filled—with GHOSTS of ev'ry sort and size:—

"Good gracious!" shouted Quixo, "I am in for it, it seems. Alas! I never longed so much for bright Aurora's gleams. Look here, you ghostly malcontents, I'm rather sick of *you*—but, as I must, I'll lie and listen; please to

make that do. So, 'Who are you, and what d'ye want?' No; don't all talk together: 'twould raise a ghostly storm the 'Flying Dutchman' scarce could weather!"

The Senior Ghost (as we suppose) came forward, and he sighed—

"We hear you want a subject?"

"No, I don't!" Count Quixo cried.

"Yes, you *do*! Don't be deceitful, nor neglect your proper duty; but divest your mind of Skirts and Hoops, and Aggravated Beauty; for if you dared to write their wrongs, you'd raise no end of fusses—while you'd do the World a favour if you wrote on

"CABS AND 'BUSSES!"

"I won't!" said Quixo Mixo.

"Yes, you will! Don't be ferocious; just *think* of London cabs—now aren't they perfectly *atrocious*?"

"You want a cab: if very wet, you're lucky if you get it; if very fine, they're either full or 'going home,' *you bet it!* But if by chance you find a man who condescends to take you, he'll either go to sleep at once or all to pieces shake you.

"Crafty fellow, well he knows that if you cry '*Go faster!*'—sixpence more is pretty sure, or else he'll *tell the master*. While, if you say, '*Don't beat your horse, I'm not in any hurry,*' he'll vow he's lost a 'paying job,' and charge his fare to *Surrey!*

"The cab itself, how sweet it smells, how clean its every seat; but, gracious, how particular he is about your *feet!*

"'Be keerful o' them kushshons, please, for this 'ere keb is *NEW!*'—a statement very often *made*, but very

seldom *true*. The horse—poor beast!—it goes in such a lame, unhappy way, that you sit in mortal terror of the *R.S.P.C.A!*

“Those *busses*, now, how *nice* they are: I love to mount the top, despite the danger—and the ‘cad’s’ abuse when called upon to *stop!* And, if you like contagion, suffocation, loss of *purse*—and rather *wish* to miss your train, why get inside the *hearse!*”

“You want a subject?—write on this: no longer can I stay; but, no doubt, my friends have, one and all, a few short words to say.”

The chorus of the ghostly crew uprose, confused and weird:—lest day should dawn, *all spoke at once*, as Quixo Mixo feared:—

“You want a Subject?—”

“Theme?—”

“Device?—”

“Plot?—”

“Inspiration?—”

“Tale?—”

“I’ll give you one!—”

“I’ll give you *ten!*—”

“We’ll give you *half a bale!*—”

“Make fun of SERVANTS—show **their tricks—!**”

“*No*; pity their hard fate—”

“Cry down the Cyprus Treaty—”

“Bah! praise Beaconsfield the Great!—”

“Cut up the host whose stuffy rooms he fancies so *elastic—*”

“Far better to abuse his *wine*, and call his chairs ‘fantastic—’”

refold and replace the papers in the cabinet, and lock it; and, although now but half-conscious hold the telegram over the gas-flame till it was consumed. For had she waited until this moment, she would have flown unhesitatingly to his aid, as, this act completed, he staggered again, reached his hand toward the bell, but vainly, and then fell prone upon the sofa.

But alas, no providential nor accidental hand was raised to save him, or anticipate the progress of this story. And when, half-an-hour later, Mrs. Rightbody, a little alarmed and more indignant at his violation of the Doctor's rules, appeared upon the threshold, Mr. Rightbody lay upon the sofa, dead !

With bustle, with thronging feet, with the irruption of strangers, and a hurrying to and fro, but, more than all, with an impulse and emotion unknown to the mansion when its owner was in life, Mrs. Rightbody strove to call back the vanished life ; but in vain. The highest medical intelligence, called from its bed at this strange hour, saw only the demonstration of its theories, made a year before. Mr. Rightbody was dead—without doubt—without mystery—even as a correct man should die ; logically, and endorsed by the highest medical authority.

But even in the confusion, Mrs. Rightbody managed to speed a messenger to the telegraph office for a copy of the despatch received by Mr. Rightbody, but now missing.

In the solitude of her own room, and without a confidant, she read these words :

“ Copy.

“ To Mr. Adams Rightbody, Boston, Mass.

“ Joshua Silsbee died suddenly this morning. His

last request was that you should remember your sacred compact with him of thirty years ago.

(Signed) "SEVENTY-FOUR.

"SEVENTY-FIVE."

In the darkened home, and amid the formal condolences of their friends, who had called to gaze upon the scarcely cold features of their late associate, Mrs. Rightbody managed to send another despatch. It was addressed to "Seventy-Four and Seventy-Five," Cottonwood. In a few hours she received the following enigmatical response :

"A horse thief, named Josh Silsbee, was lynched yesterday morning by the Vigilantes at Deadwood."

PART II.

THE spring of 1874 was retarded in the Californian Sierras. So much so, that certain Eastern tourists who had early ventured into the Yo Semite Valley, found themselves, one May morning, snow-bound against the tempestuous shoulders of *El Capitan*. So furious was the onset of the wind at the Upper Merced Cañon, that even so respectable a lady as Mrs. Rightbody was fain to cling to the neck of her guide to keep her seat in the saddle ; while Miss Alice, scorning all masculine assistance, was hurled, a lovely chaos, against the snowy wall of the chasm. Mrs. Rightbody screamed ; Miss Alice raged under her breath, but scrambled to her feet again in silence.

"I told you so," said Mrs. Rightbody, in an indignant whisper as her daughter again ranged beside her,—*"I warned you especially, Alice—that—that—"*

"What?" interrupted Miss Alice, curtly.

"That you would need your chemiloons and high boots," said Mrs. Rightbody, in a regretful undertone, slightly increasing her distance from the guides.

Miss Alice shrugged her pretty shoulders scornfully, but ignored her mother's implication.

"You were particularly warned against going into the Valley at this season," she only replied, grimly.

Mrs. Rightbody raised her eyes, impatiently.

"You know how anxious I was to discover your poor father's strange correspondent, Alice; you have no consideration."

"But when you *have* discovered him—what then?" queried Miss Alice.

"What then?"

"Yes. My belief is that you will find the telegram only a mere business cypher. And all this quest mere nonsense."

"Alice! why, *you* yourself thought your father's conduct that night, very strange. Have you forgotten?"

The young lady had *not*, but for some far-reaching feminine reason, chose to ignore it at that moment, when her late tumble in the snow was still fresh in her mind.

"And this woman—whoever she may be," continued Mrs. Rightbody.

"How do you know there's a woman in the case?" interrupted Miss Alice, wickedly, I fear.

"How do—I—know—there's a woman?" slowly ejacu-

lated Mrs. Rightbody, floundering in the snow and the unexpected possibility of such a ridiculous question. But here her guide flew to her assistance, and estopped further speech. And, indeed, a grave problem was before them.

The road that led to their single place of refuge—a cabin, half hotel, half trading-post, scarce a mile away—skirted the base of the rocky dome, and passed perilously near the precipitous wall of the valley. There was a rapid descent of a hundred yards or more to this terrace-like passage, and the guides paused for a moment of consultation, coolly oblivious alike to the terrified questioning of Mrs. Rightbody or the half-insolent independence of the daughter. The elder guide was russet-bearded, stout, and humorous; the younger was dark-bearded, slight, and serious.

“Ef you kin git young Bunker Hill to let you tote her on your shoulders, I’ll git the Madam to hang on to me,” came to Mrs. Rightbody’s horrified ears as the expression of her particular companion.

“Freeze to the old gal, and don’t reckon on me if the daughter starts in to play it alone,” was the enigmatical response of the younger guide.

Miss Alice overheard both propositions; and before the two men returned to their side, that high-spirited young lady had urged her horse down the declivity.

Alas, at this moment a gust of whirling snow swept down upon her. There was a flounder, a mis-step, a fatal strain on the wrong rein, a fall, a few plucky but unavailing struggles, and both horse and rider slid ignominiously down toward the rocky shelf. Mrs. Rightbody screamed. Miss Alice, from a confused *debris* of snow and ice, up-

lifted a vexed and colouring face to the younger guide—a little the more angrily, perhaps, that she saw a shade of impatience on his face.

“Don’t move, but tie one end of the ‘lass’ under your arms, and throw me the other,” he said quietly.

“What do you mean by ‘lass’—the lasso?” asked Miss Alice, disgustedly.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Then why don’t you say so?”

“Oh, Alice!” reproachfully interpolated Mrs. Right-body, encircled by the elder guide’s stalwart arm.

Miss Alice deigned no reply, but drew the loop of the lasso over her shoulders, and let it drop to her round waist. Then she essayed to throw the other end to her guide. Dismal failure! The first fling nearly knocked her off the ledge, the second went all wild against the rocky wall, the third caught in a thorn bush, twenty feet below her companion’s feet. Miss Alice’s arm sunk helplessly to her side, at which signal of unqualified surrender, the younger guide threw himself half-way down the slope, worked his way to the thorn bush, hung for a moment perilously over the parapet, secured the lasso, and then began to pull away at his lovely burden. Miss Alice was no dead weight, however, but steadily half-scrambled on her hands and knees to within a foot or two of her rescuer. At this too familiar proximity, she stood up, and leaned a little stiffly against the line, causing the guide to give an extra pull, which had the lamentable effect of landing her almost in his arms. As it was, her intelligent forehead struck his nose sharply, and, I regret to add, treating of a romantic situation, caused that somewhat prominent sign

and token of a hero to bleed freely. Miss Alice instantly clapped a handful of snow over his nostrils.

"Now elevate your right arm," she said, commandingly.

He did as he was bidden—but sulkily.

"That compresses the artery."

No man, with a pretty woman's hand and a handful of snow over his mouth and nose, could effectively utter a heroic sentence, nor with his arm elevated stiffly over his head assume a heroic attitude. But when his mouth was free again he said, half-sulkily, half-apologetically,

"I might have known a girl couldn't throw worth a cent."

"Why?" demanded Miss Alice, sharply.

"Because—why—because—you see—they haven't got the experience," he stammered feebly.

"Nonsense, they haven't the *clavicle*—that's all! It's because I'm a woman, and smaller in the collar-bone, that I haven't the play of the fore-arm which you have. See!" She squared her shoulders slightly, and turned the blaze of her dark eyes full on his. "Experience, indeed! A girl can learn anything a boy can."

Apprehension took the place of ill-humour in her hearer. He turned his eyes hastily away, and glanced above him. The elder guide had gone forward to catch Miss Alice's horse, which, relieved of his rider, was floundering toward the trail. Mrs. Rightbody was nowhere to be seen. And these two were still twenty feet below the trail!

There was an awkward pause.

"Shall I pull you up the same way?" he queried. Miss

Alice looked at his nose, and hesitated. "Or will you take my hand?" he added, in surly impatience. To his surprise, Miss Alice took his hand, and they began the ascent together.

But the way was difficult and dangerous. Once or twice her feet slipped on the smoothly-worn rock beneath, and she confessed to an inward thankfulness when her uncertain feminine hand-grip was exchanged for his strong arm around her waist. Not that he was ungentle, but Miss Alice angrily felt that he had once or twice exercised his superior masculine functions in a rough way; and yet the next moment she would have probably rejected the idea that she had even noticed it. There was no doubt, however, that he *was* a little surly.

A fierce scramble finally brought them back in safety to the trail; but in the action Miss Alice's shoulder, striking a projecting boulder, wrung from her a feminine cry of pain, her first sign of womanly weakness. The guide stopped instantly.

"I am afraid I hurt you?"

She raised her brown lashes, a trifle moist from suffering, looked in his eyes, and dropped her own. Why, she could not tell. And yet he had certainly a kind face, despite its seriousness; and a fine face, albeit unshorn and weather-beaten. Her own eyes had never been so near to any man's before, save her lover's; and yet she had never seen so much in even his. She slipped her hand away, not with any reference to him, but rather to ponder over this singular experience, and somehow felt uncomfortable thereat.

Nor was he less so. It was but a few days ago that



"He strode moodily ahead."—Page 28.

he had accepted the charge of this young woman from the elder guide, who was the recognized escort of the Rightbody party, having been a former correspondent of her father's. He had been hired like any other guide, but had undertaken the task with that chivalrous enthusiasm which the average Californian always extends to the sex so rare to him. But the illusion had passed, and he had dropped into a sulky practical sense of his situation, perhaps fraught with less danger to himself. Only when appealed to by his manhood or her weakness, he had forgotten his wounded vanity.

He strode moodily ahead, dutifully breaking the path for her in the direction of the distant cañon, where Mrs. Rightbody and her friend awaited them. Miss Alice was first to speak. In this trackless, uncharted *terra incognita* of the passions, it is always the woman who steps out to lead the way.

"You know this place very well. I suppose you have lived here long?"

"Yes."

"You were not born here—no?"

A long pause.

"I observe they call you 'Stanislaus Joc.' Of course that is not your real name?" (Mem. Miss Alice had never called him *anything*, usually prefacing any request with a languid, "O-er-er, please, mister-er-a!" explicit enough for his station.

"No."

Miss Alice (trotting after him, and bawling in his ear),
"What name did you say?"

The man (doggedly), "I don't know."

Nevertheless, when they reached the cabin, after an half-hour's buffeting with the storm, Miss Alice applied herself to her mother's escort, Mr. Ryder.

"What's the name of the man who takes care of my horse?"

"Stanislaus Joe," responded Mr. Ryder.

"Is that all?"

"No; sometimes he's called Joe Stanislaus."

Miss Alice (satirically), "I suppose it's the custom here to send young ladies out with gentlemen who hide their names under an *alias*?"

Mr. Ryder (greatly perplexed), "Why, dear me, Miss Alice, you allers 'peared to me as a gal as was able to take keer—"

Miss Alice (interrupting with a wounded dove-like timidity), "Oh, never mind, please!"

The cabin offered but scanty accommodation to the tourists, which fact, when indignantly presented by Mrs. Rightbody, was explained by the good-humoured Ryder from the circumstance that the usual hotel was only a slight affair of boards, cloth, and paper, put up during the season and partly dismantled in the fall. "You couldn't be kept warm enough there," he added. Nevertheless Miss Alice noticed that both Mr. Ryder and Stanislaus Joe retired there with their pipes, after having prepared the ladies' supper with the assistance of an Indian woman, who apparently emerged from the earth at the coming of the party, and disappeared as mysteriously.

The stars came out brightly before they slept, and the next morning a clear unwinking sun beamed with almost summer power through the shutterless window of their

cabin, and ironically disclosed the details of its rude interior. Two or three mangy, half-eaten buffalo robes, a bear-skin, some suspicious-looking blankets, rifles and saddles, deal tables and barrels made up its scant inventory. A strip of faded calico hung before a recess near the chimney, but so blackened by smoke and age that even feminine curiosity respected its secret. Mrs. Rightbody was in high spirits, and informed her daughter that she was at last on the track of her husband's unknown correspondent. "Seventy-four and Seventy-five" represent two members of the Vigilance Committee, my dear, and Mr. Ryder will assist me to find them."

"Mr. Ryder!" ejaculated Miss Alice, in scornful astonishment.

"Alice," said Mrs. Rightbody, with a suspicious assumption of sudden defence, "you injure yourself—you injure me by this exclusive attitude. Mr. Ryder is a friend of your father's, an exceedingly well-informed gentleman. I have not, of course, imparted to him the extent of my suspicions. But he can help me to what I must and will know. You might treat him a little more civilly—or, at least, a little better than you do his servant, your guide. Mr. Ryder is a gentleman, and not a paid courier."

Miss Alice was suddenly attentive. When she spoke again she asked, "Why do you not find something about this Silsbee—who died—or was hung—or something of that kind?"

"Child," said Mrs. Rightbody, "don't you see, there was no Silsbee, or if there was, he was simply the confidant of that—woman!"

A knock at the door, announcing the presence of Mr. Ryder and Stanislaus Joe with the horses, checked Mrs. Rightbody's speech. As the animals were being packed, Mrs. Rightbody for a moment withdrew in confidential conversation with Mr. Ryder, and, to the young lady's still greater annoyance, left her alone with Stanislaus Joe. Miss Alice was not in good temper, but she felt it necessary to say something.

"I hope the hotel offers better quarters for travellers than this in summer," she began.

"It does."

"Then this does not belong to it?"

"No, ma'am."

"Who lives here, then?"

"I do."

"I beg your pardon," stammered Miss Alice, "I thought you lived where we hired—where we met you—in—in—you must excuse me."

"I'm not a regular guide, but as times were hard, and I was out of grub, I took the job."

"Out of grub"! "job!" And *she* was the "job." What would Henry Marvin say? it would nearly kill him. She began herself to feel a little frightened, and walked towards the door.

"One moment, miss!"

The young girl hesitated. The man's tone was surly, and yet indicated a certain kind of half-pathetic grievance. Her curiosity got the better of her prudence, and she turned back.

"That morning," he began hastily, "when we were coming down the valley you picked me up twice."

old squabbles laid up on paper to rake out and fetch in evidence some future time. We go in for peace here."

As we walked abroad I see a great many pleasant-lookin' houses, but no public buildin's.

"Where's your Insane Asylum?" sez I.

"Haven't got any."

"But what do you do with your crazy folks?"

"Hang 'em."

"For mercy's sakes! you must be kep' busy," sez I, real horrified with sech talk.

"My, no. You know, in the States, when any body does any thing real bad, they prove 'em by course of law to be insane; we think an ounce o' prevention is worth ten pound of cure, so we hang 'em before they do anything. The idee ruther keeps folks in their senses, too. As for the women, what with no tea, no novels, no readin' or writin', they don't lose their minds, as they call 'em. If they up and have the hysterics, why, there's the sea; we jest pitch 'em in at a rope's end, and pull 'em out when they've got composed. It's a sure cure."

"And where's your hospital?"

"We don't need one. We haven't got a doctor around, sir. People don't get sick much here. If they do, we nurse 'em up at home with herbs and things, and if they can't be cured, they die; we've all got to die sometime, and we think it's easier to die off nateral like, than be plagued to death with drugs and doctors."

By this time I was real thirsty, so I said I wanted a drink.

"All right; here's the town pump."

"Oh, I don't mean water; a julep or a sling would be about right."

"Can't have it," sez he, as positive as thunder; "no sech in this kingdom."

"Why, you gave me sherry yesterday."

"Out o' your own flask, and you see the bottom of that."

"But what do you do in sickness?"

"Do without; our folks think it's a heap better to die of a decent fever or a respectable cholera, than to learn the taste of liquor and live to be drunkards."

"Why, how you do talk!" sez I. "Supposin', now, one of your own childern was took sick, and you see 'em dyin' for want of a little stimulatn'?"

"They won't do it; besides, I'd ruther have 'em die of anything than the tremens."

I see 'twa'n't no use to argue with him. When a man is sot on a thing, words is no use; so I took a drink of water and went along. The streets were clean as a new pin, and mortal still, though you could hear little folks laughin' and cacklin' in the cool gardens and pleasant housen by the side of the way.

"Where air your public schools?" sez I.

"Here," sez he, stopping before a long low house, like a shed some, that seemed to be fixed up with rows o' hogsheads, among which several men was steppin' round and talkin' out loud, one at a time; "there's the school."

"But I don't see no childern."

"No; you can't see through a millstone no more'n the next man. We head up the boys at six years old in big barrels, and feed an' eddoocate 'em through the bung-

hole till the age of twenty. They're extension barrels, so's't the boys can grow."

I *was* took aback. I was kinder riled. "What!" sez I, "all your boys in barrels! None o' them things folks lay sech stress on in teachers' conventions—no home influences, no manly sports, no everlastin' friendships, no Sunday-schools, no—" Here I sort o' give in; breath seemed to peter out. But he took up the talk:

"No, sir! Cats and pigs and chickens live out all their days in peace here; nobody's a tyrant over mother and the girls from dawn to dark; no broken bones nor cracked skulls. Our boys don't never get drowned, blowed up with powder, tangled up in burr saws, split with hatchets, spilled off'n horses, run over in the streets, nor jammed to bits under fire-engines. We don't have boys swearin' and spittin' on every street corner; strainin' their backs a-boat-racin' and their tempers bettin'; no colleges to upset their manners and morals, and let 'em herd together like swine, and then turnin' of 'em loose on a world lying in wickedness, as our old parson used to call it. Nobody here's killed at base-ball, nor mangled nuther. Marbles, peanuts, and fire-crackers never pester us. We have peace."

"How delightful," sez I, kinder involuntary.

"More'n all that, we don't never have no divorces. Them boys come out at twenty year old so orful meek and pleasant and grateful, their wives don't have no trouble with 'em at all."

"Good gracious, Smith, you don't give in to petticoat gov'ment here, do ye?"

"Well, why not? The women want somethin' to do

to make 'em feel mighty ; why shouldn't they govern the men ? It pleases them an' don't hurt us."

"But it's degradin' to a man. Never, sir, would I put up with that. I will be master, I tell ye, in my own house. I will be minded, right off, in the fam'ly. Man is the nateral head of all things, and must be give up to."

I said this real fierce, and John give me the queerest look you ever see. Ef I ain't mistook he actooally winked at me. What could he mean ? He patted my shoulder sorter friendly, and said,

"There ! there ! I know how 'tis with ye. You no need to demonstrate here ; we're all used to it ; it's a matter of course, as you might say. Don't say no more ; I understand."

I declare for't, I scurce could guess what he *was* up to ; but he went on :

"Girls, you see, don't need no schoolin'. They don't learn nothin' but house-work, sewin', takin' care of childern and sick folks, singin', and fussin' in the garden ; their mas teach 'em all that."

"But where's your jail ? your prison ? your court-house ?"

"Nowhere, thanks be to praise ? If a man kills any body, we give him a spade and a bag of potatoes, and take and row him off to a desolate island, and leave him there to farm it. I tell ye, he puts to and digs ! But farmin' for a livin' is capital punishment, wuss'n hangin', a long sight—a real state of sin an' misery."

"I hope you've got plenty of islands," sez I, kinder sneerin'.

"Plenty for that puppus, sir. There ain't no great of murderin' done here, for we don't allow no fire-arms of no kind around in this place."

"No guns nor pistols? How in the world do you shoot mad dogs?"

"We don't have no dogs, so there ain't no mad ones."

"No dogs! Why, don't ye know they're the faithful friend of man, as the readin'-book sez?"

"We know they bite folks and make 'em die in torters, ravin' mad. That ain't our kind of faithful friends. Besides, we have fust-rate mutton here, and that's better'n hydrophoby."

Dear me! what a cuss-tomer this feller was! He met ye at every turn jest as pat! 'Twas exasperatin'; so sez I, "Where's the bank?"

"Haw! haw!" laughed John. "That's Yankee all over. Money, sir, the Scriptor sez, is the root of all evil—"

"It don't say that, now I tell ye!" I put in, direct, glad enough to trump his trick.

"Well, it doos in my Bible."

"What 'll you bet?"

"Bet! there ain't no bettin' permitted here. I should be set to pumpin' at the town pump three hours a day for three weeks if I should bet you a peanut."

"Well! well! well! I won't stick to it; but I tell ye what Scriptor *doos* say: 'The *love* o' money's the root of all evil!'"

"Oh, pshaw! what's the differ'nce? Well, we think the love on't can't be without the critter itself: so we

don't have no money ; therefore no banks, no notes, no checks, nor renewals, nor interest, nor nothin'."

"But how do ye buy things?"

"We change round, jest as folks used to before money was made : 'tain't always a close fit, but it's better'n all the wear an' tear of bills and credit, defaultin' and embezzlin'. I tell ye it comes hard for a feller to embezzle sheep and cows and sech : they won't pocket."

"But supposin', as you say, things don't fit? say you want suthin t'other man's got, and he don't hanker after what you've got : how about that?"

"Oh, I can go without, I guess ; food an' clothin' we always manage to have a plenty ; we live right along, an' don't worry about the futur' Jest you notice the folks in the street ; do they look like Dedham folks? Not much."

Sure enough they didn't. The men was easy-goin', pleasant, smilin', broad-shouldered fellers as ever you see ; and the women—gracious ! they was as rosy and fair-complected as a posy bed, and straighter'n bean poles ; but dressed dreadful queer.

"You don't pan out no great on clothes here, do ye?" sez I, kind of smilin' like.

"Well," sez he, "we have enough to keep good and warm, and we call 'em good-lookin' "

I must own the women folks looked sort of slimpsy : folks was wearin' hoops when I left Dedham—all but Cynthy Minervy, and she had on a Bloomer rig. 'Twas handy ; I don't deny but what 'twas handy ; but it did look mortal curious. But she said, "The needs of

hygienic science, and the true nurture of the physical, demand freedom of the osseous structure and bounding space for vital pulsation, lest the divine Me be incarcerated in effete human bonds." I guess that's it; it's quite a spell sence I've seen Cynthy; she's found liberty, and I don't follow her round a sight. Well, the women here did look consider'ble like statooary females, but I didn't say so, an' he went on :

"No fashions here, sir, I tell ye. Them kind o' gowns was ordered to begin with, and kep' right along; they can have 'em any colour they're a mind to, and they can wear any kind of flowers and leaves that grow in their hair or their bunnets, and some of 'em do fix up amazing smart, now I tell ye."

"Law, yes. I know the kind; there is some women has it hard; they'll begin to prink and smirk and fix up like lightnin' from the time they're three year old till they die, even if they be old maids."

"That's another blessing in disguise we dispense with in this country," said John, a-larfin'.

"No old maids? Do tell! Why, how do ye prevent it?"

"Why, it's thought best, for the sake of peace, that everybody should be married; so folks keep an eye out, and when one man sees a young feller that's suitable like for his girl to marry, he goes and talks to his folks about it, private. If they're willin', he goes, an' tells the king; if they ain't willin', why, that's the end on't; but if they be, the king he jest sends his head man to tell that young feller he ain't on no account to marry that particular girl; he can make love to anybody else he's a

mind to, but that girl is forbid. Then the head man he goes to the girl's mother, an' says he's heerd that girl is makin' eyes at that young man, and the king don't approve of it, so she'd better be looking elsewheres. It's reckoning on natur', you see: there's lots of human natur' in everybody. Why, the very minnit them two young folks hear how that they ain't on no account to have nothin' to do with each other, they pitch right in. I never know'd it to fail, not one time. And then, when they're ready to tie the knot, some of their pas or mas that's up to time advises of 'em to petition the king, and after a spell he gives in and they're married. Ain't that cute?"

"It doos beat all. But how do you come out even, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, there's mostly a chance for everybody, what with widowers; if there is any surplus, why, we colonize 'em on Garden Island, and set 'em to raising small fruits and poultry. That keeps them busy, you see; there ain't any men folks to quarrel about, nobody else's affairs to gossip over; and if a man happens to want a wife, why, he can go over there, if he gets a permit, and looks about him, and the presiding widder settles the matter."

"Well! well! well! I never did see sech a place; no strong-minded females, no littery women, no votin', no log-rollin', no lobbyin'! But look a-here, how did ye start your king? It's as great a wonderment to me how they start kings as how they start yeast."

"Why, you see, there wa'n't but about thirty of us at first, all picked men and friends; and we didn't any of

us want to run the thing—we was dead tired of bein' sovereign people ; so we looked round a spell, here and there, and finally hit on a real smart, honest, capable fellow, with a good healthy wife, and made him an offer, and he took it up. We swore to hold him up, and have his children come after him, and we give him power enough to keep folks straight. After we got runnin', why, some of us fixed up a ship and went back for a few more picked hands ; perhaps we fetched away, take 'em big and little, fust an' last, a couple o' hundred : we've lived here twenty year now ; nobody's ben this way before you ; we're out o' the tracks entirely, and we're well off and happy. I tell you, this is livin'."

"But where's your meetin'-house?"

He turned round a sharp corner, and we come to a large low house without any steeple, opened a door, and stepped right in : it was a real big room, with pleasant red carpets and kind of cream-coloured walls, easy cushioned chairs standin' thick on the floor, and a kind of a readin'-desk behind a long table that had a dark red cloth on it, and some low wide white vases onto each end, fairly drippin' with flowers. There was little recesses betwixt the windows, with curtains to 'em, here and there drawn together.

"Them is for folks that want to come here day-times and say their prayers. It's private like and still, you see, in them little alcoves, and we never keep the doors locked."

All the wall was hung with pictures ; I couldn't begin to tell 'em all ; but the house was bright and pleasant and sweet and warm beyond anything I ever

see. Seemed jest as if it was home. I could ha' set there all day.

"Got a good preacher?" sez I.

"We don't have preachin'. Our minister he jest reads the Bible, whatever part he thinks best; then we have singin'—everybody sings—and he prays once or twice."

"Well, if he's like some folks to home, he'll do more preachin' in one prayer than 'll last ye a week. My! I've heerd Parson Styles tell the Lord as much about other folks and the 'fairs of the nation as though He was a perfect stranger to 'em."

"We don't have no such prayin' here, for we have prayers out of a book, the best out of all the good old books, and a good many right out of the Bible. Once in a great while he reads a sermon out of somebody's printed ones, but not very frequent."

"What on airth does he do week-days?"

"Why, he goes round visitin' folks, talkin' to 'em friendly, and tryin' to straighten 'em out, or seein' to the sick. We all see he don't want for clothes and food for his family, and so that's off his mind."

"This is a curious place enough," sez I. "But I'm fairly hungry with so many idees pourin' in on me. Ain't there a place round here where you can get things to eat?"

"Yes, the baker's over in the square."

So we come around a ways, and got to a real clean, light store in a big white buildin'. There was two or three small tables near to the windows, and as we set down a nice waiter-boy came up to 'tend to us.

"What will you have?" sez John.

"Well, a piece o' pie and cheese, I guess," sez I.

"*Pie!*" hollered John.

"PIE!" shrieked the waiter-boy.

They couldn't have looked more thunder-struck if I'd asked for prussic acid or a drink of strychnine tincture.

"Well," sez I, strivin' to speak calm, "what's to pay now? I said pie."

"Why, it's a penal offence to make a pie in this country, and a hangin' matter to eat it," sez John, in real sober earnest.

"Thunder!" sez I; "what's that for?"

"Oh, my deluded friend, don't you know that pie is at the bottom of our former country's demoralisation? Don't you know that pie was the germ of the Revolution, the instigator of the war of 1812, the inspirer of rebellion? Don't you know that pie is a concretion of 'riginal sin and actual transgression? that pie and prison are cause and effect? that this seductive but fatal viand has destroyed the American stomach and disintegrated the American brain, till the whole country is a mass of political corruption and moral decay? Don't you know pie is—"

"Oh, stop! do stop!" sez I. "I've eat pie sence I was born, and I ain't a jail-bird or a fool yet."

"But jest think what you might have been on better and hullsomer food: you might have been a Solon, an Aristides, a Homer, a George Washington."

"I'd a sight ruther be a tin peddler. Do drop pie, and give me somethin' to eat, if you've got any thing short o' corn fodder; I can't stomach that."

Well, they fetched in bread—fresh bread, jest as white and light and sweet as you want to see, a pat o' butter hard and yellow as wax, a big glass pitcher of cream, a dish of white strawberries, a basket of red cherries, and a comb of honey clear as water. I ain't goin' to go back on pie—I'd jest as soon think of sassing my grandmother—but, I tell *you*, a dish of white strawberries, with a leetle mite of clover honey jest trickled round amongst 'em, and thick cream poured clean up to the top of the saucer, and sech bread crumbled in, comes putty near to bein' good eatin'.

John laughed to see me pile in.

"'Most as good as pie?" sez he.

"Pretty near," sez I, betwixt the mouthfuls.

Well, sir, I can't have no time nor room to say more, for I ain't one that holds the pen of a ready writer—it comes hard. But ef I was to take time, I could tell vollums about that country. I had to come away, for I had settlin' up to do in Dedham; but it's my purpose to go back, wind an' weather permittin', some time or 'nother. Cynthy Minervy's gone out to Illinois for a spell. Dedham folks do say there's ben a speritooal here lecturin', who seemed to be round consider'ble, 'long of her; and Parson Styles kinder hinted to me 't I'd better foller her up, for she sort o' let on to him that I'd up and left her, and 'twas good cause for divorce; and Illinois, ye knw! But I said, sez I, "Let her went, parson. Ef Cynthy Minervy's tired o' me, why, I ain't the man to hender her bein' happy her own fashion. I shan't never interfere; and I'll take Freddie 'long o' me." The parson said I was a remarkable generous

man, a self-denyin' feller as ever was. Parsons don't know everything. But ef Cynthy Minervy doos git a divorce, as sure as guns I shall put for Knoware as quick as I can charter a fishin' smack.

I see I've all along dropped into Dedham kind o' talk ; it comes so nateral, I suppose. I've ben and traded off my Unabridged for a copper tea-kettle and Tupper's Proverbs, so that I haven't had no help about words ; but then that book of Ph'losophy doos beat all, and Dedham water is death on tin kettles. And when all's said and done, them words is the best that tells what you mean to say the easiest, short bein' better than long, jest as quick blows is better'n slow ones.

Ef any body 'd like to go to Knoware along o' me, passage and outfits can be obtained at the lowest prices, very reasonable, by applyin' right off to

B. MUNN CHOWSON,
Dedham,
Mass.





My Carte—A Feverish Dream.

By HENRY S. LEIGH.



—♦—
WAS fain to discover some gift for my fair,
(Which was no easy matter to choose).

I perchance would have sent her some
locks of my hair

But my locks are too scanty to lose.

Should I proffer some trinket—a novel—some
gloves—

Or deposit some rhymes at her feet?

Nay, to startle the dearest and last of my loves

I would sit for my *carte de visite*.

The resolve that had flashed through my fancy at e'en

Re-appeared in my slumbers at night.

Never yet such a series of horrors, I ween,

Filled the soul of a sleeper with fright.

I was wafted in visions—I cannot say how—

To some weird and sequestered retreat;

Where, accosting a Stranger, I asked with a bow—

“Can I sit for my *carte de visite*?”

Could I dream that the Stranger so meek and so mild
Was a Fiend in the likeness of Man ?
He returned my salute ; he benignantly smiled ;
He politely responded, " You *can* ! "
Such a picture of artless yet elegant ease
I was charmed, I acknowledge, to meet ;
So I said, " Will you point out the chair, if you please,
Where I sit for my *carte de visite* ? "

In a trice, like a criminal bound on the rack,
I indented that engine of pain ;
While a cunningly-fashioned machine at my back
Played a march on the base of my brain.
Quoth a voice, " Take a natural attitude, Sir :
Do not *wobble* so much, I entreat.
It will ruin the negative, mind, if you stir
While you sit for your *carte de visite*."

I became like a rock ; but the voice in mine ear
Gently muttered, " That's better, no doubt :
But your smile is a little spasmodic, I fear,
And I don't like your chin sticking out ! "

* * * * *

I awoke with a struggle—my blood running cold—
As it runs while my dream I repeat.
If my reader should relish the tale that I've told—
Let him sit for his *carte de visite* !



Moses Clymer's Business.

WHenever I pass that dingy four-story building on Nassau Street in which Barry and I first established ourselves as attorneys and counsellors at law, I am led to wonder what has become of Moses Clymer. Eighteen years ago, when Barry and I occupied the back-room on the third floor of this building, Moses did a thriving business in the apartment directly opposite. I say thriving, because many persons passed in and out of that apartment, so that the bell, which was fastened over the top of the door, kept up an almost continuous ringing. Everybody who ascended the stairs to the third story appeared to enter Clymer's room. I recall now, with a sad smile, the numerous disappointments we suffered because of this singular partiality which was displayed for Moses's office. A score of times, at least, during the first day or two following our removal to the building, Barry raised his eyes from the pages of "Pendennis," listened a moment

to the sound of footsteps on the stairs, and then dropping "Pendennis" and seizing a pen, fell to covering a sheet of legal cap with his own signature. A brief moment of delightful expectancy, while the footsteps paused on the landing without; a spasm of hope that at last a client had come; and then the tinkling of the bell over Moses's door, and a sudden sinking of spirits in the manly breasts of Barry and Bushnell. Following these dashed hopes, a dashed exclamation from the senior member of the firm, a resumption of "Pendennis," and unbroken silence.

Yet it was not of vital importance that clients should come to Barry and Bushnell. They were still young men whose parents regarded them as boys, and whose good fortune made it unnecessary for them to take any thought of the morrow. They knew that their bread, buttered with tolerable liberality, would be forthcoming, whether clients came or not. Yet it was somewhat embarrassing, at the expiration of three weeks, to be forced to acknowledge that neither man, woman, nor child had made application for their professional services. To this embarrassment was added a touch of exasperation at the thought of Moses Clymer's steady stream of callers.

"Wonder if he's a lawyer?" said I, one day, breaking the silence which had followed the sound of the bell.

"I think not," answered Barry. "He would have a sign if he were."

"Perhaps he is a note-shaver," suggested I.

"Possibly. He does a rushing business, whatever its character. I purpose to keep my eyes open and find out what it is."

Barry attempted first to get his eyes open by interro-

gating the other occupants of the building. Not one of them could tell how Moses Clymer earned his livelihood. Opinion was divided. Firman and Co., the stationers on the first floor, did not know that there was such a man as Clymer in the building—so close the intimacy which life in a metropolis breeds! Dickerson and Smith, engravers, second floor front, believed Mr. Clymer to be a lawyer. Jennison Brothers, lawyers, second floor back, supposed Clymer was a physician. (In support of this conclusion, they cited the fact of having seen a number of consumptive-looking men pass into his room.) Doyle, stenographer, fourth floor, was inclined to the opinion that Clymer was an insurance agent, with some interest in real estate. By the time Barry had made an end of his inquiries, he found that his eyes were not opened with respect to Moses Clymer's occupation. His curiosity however, was whetted to a keener edge.

The testimony of the Jennisons, whom Barry and I hated cordially, first, because they were lawyers, and, second, because they were lawyers with clients—the testimony of the Jennisons, I repeat, corresponded precisely with what we ourselves had observed. Not only did consumptive-looking men pass into Moses Clymer's office, but men, also, whose general appearance hinted of indigestion, and possibly biliousness. Without the aid of a very vivid imagination, one found it easy to associate all manner of diseases with Moses's callers. Moreover, there was a certain dilapidated air about them—a shabbiness of dress and a uniform uncleanness of person—which suggested at once the need of tonics and soap. Obviously Mr. Clymer's business, whatever it might be.

gave him acquaintance with a very peculiar class of people. There was a certain negative resemblance traceable in them all, and some points even of positive likeness. Apart from their usually shabby clothes and the decayed appearance already mentioned, it was noticeable that they frequently carried rolls of paper in their hands, which they left behind them upon emerging from Moses's room.

Barry was pleased to devote much time to speculation regarding our neighbour across the hall. When his inquiries had served only to sharpen his curiosity, he determined to pay Moses a visit. This he did, but without satisfying himself as to the nature of the business carried on by Mr. Clymer.

"There isn't any thing in the room," said he, "to indicate what the man does. A desk or counter stands in the middle of the floor. This is shielded by a ground-glass top, like the teller's desk in a bank. At one end of the room is a partition six or seven feet high, with three doors, all of which were closed. I noticed a big safe and numerous packages of papers, evidently manuscripts, arranged on shelves behind the counter."

"Did you see Moses?" I inquired.

"Yes, and talked with him—asked him to lend me a tack hammer. He said he hadn't one. Then one of his mysterious-looking callers came in and seated himself, without speaking a word. Evidently he was waiting for me to clear out, so I cleared."

This visit left us more in the dark than ever. Barry, who delighted in mystery, began straightway to weave a romance about the bald head of Moses Clymer. That

he was neither a lawyer, doctor, merchant, nor priest, was no longer a disputed question; that his buttons would count down to a thief seemed strongly probable. Unlimited leisure, which professional duties did not interrupt, gave Barry the opportunity to prosecute his investigations with untiring vigour; and the more he investigated, the more knotty appeared the problem. The consumptive-looking callers continued to pass in and out; the bell rang at irregular intervals throughout the day. Now and then we met Moses in the hall or upon the stairs, but his business remained a matter of mystery. At the end of a month, Barry, who had made a number of visits to the room across the hall, but with no better results than those attending the first, gave up the riddle in despair. And thereupon, as it happens sometimes with the more complex riddles of life, came an answer to this one from a source least expected.

Moses Clymer entered our office one morning, and announced that he wanted legal advice.

Barry thrust the book he was reading—Poe's "Tales"—under a pile of papers, and, as the senior member of the firm, turned to his first client. As the junior member of the firm, I picked up a copy of the "Session Laws," and looked becomingly grave.

"Vat is to charge for advice?" inquired Moses.

"That will be determined after you have stated your case," replied Barry.

"Voll, ten, te case vas like dis. Suppose a man vas come to you, and sells you a piece of werse——"

"A piece of what?" interrupted Barry.

"A piece of werse—poetry, you know."

Poetry! Was this, then, the mysterious merchandise in which Moses dealt? I kept the "Session Laws" before my eyes, but did not discover that I held the volume upside down. Barry's composure was simply astonishing.

"Verse," said he. "Exactly. Well?"

"Vell, you pays dis man for te piece of werse, and den you finds out dat he stole it all from a book. Now vas dere no laws vich vill get back te money vich you pays to dat man?"

"Let me understand you fully," said Barry, with the air of a veteran counsellor. "You purchase a literary article, believing it to be an original production. After you have paid for it, you discover it to be a plagiarism."

"A vich?" interrogated Moses, doubtfully.

"A plagiarism—a stolen production."

"Yes, dat vas it. Stole out of a book. And I advanced two tollars and feefy cents on dat piece of werse!"

"You bought the verses for two dollars and a half?"

"No, no. I buys notings. I loans te money, and takes te verses for security. And dey vas stole out of a book!"

This remarkable revelation, this sudden flood of light upon the mystery which had hitherto enveloped Moses Clymer's business, produced no visible effect on Barry. One might have supposed that he had known what that business was for years, and that from his childhood up he had been familiar with pawnbrokers' shops, where the fancies of the brain, instead of overcoats and watches, were accepted as security for loans. For myself, I

found it impossible to longer feign an interest in the inverted volume of "Session Laws," and closing the book, made no further attempt to conceal my amazement.

Barry proceeded to probe his first client with polite but searching interrogatories.

"Your business, then, as I understand it, is that of a pawnbroker, and you make loans upon literary articles."

"Yes, dat vas it," replied Moses.

"Are you not frequently imposed upon?" inquired I, wondering how in the name of reason a man could detect a plagiarism who did not know the meaning of the word.

"Imposhed upon?" repeated Moses, raising his eyebrows. "Vell, I never vas imposhed upon before. Villiam he knows vat is good and vat is bad. He can tell vat is stole, as I can tell gold from brass. Villiam he knows all vat is in te books, but he vas mistaken about dat piece of werse."

"I take it that William is your critic?" said Barry.

"Yes, Villiam he decides vat an article is vorth. I knows notings about any of them. You might bring me Byron or Shakespeare—it vas all te same to me. But it was not all te same to Villiam."

"What do you do with the articles that are not re-deemed?" I asked.

"Ve sells 'em—very sheap, very sheap indeed. Dere vas leetle profit in our business, and I advanced two tollars and feefty cents on dat piece of werse!"

Barry checked further curiosity, that he might regard the case from a professional point of view.

"This opens up a very intricate question of law, Mr. Clymer. I shall need some time to consider it. O-

course, if a suit were begun, the expenses would be greater than the amount of your claim."

"Vell, it is not te money so much as te example vat I wants. If te law could punish dis fellow, I vill not care if it takes all of te two tollars and feefty cents."

Moses here rose from his seat, and Barry informed him that he would be prepared to express an opinion when he had given the case proper attention.

"Doesn't this beat anything you ever heard of," he exclaimed, as the ringing of the bell announced Moses's entrance into his own room.

I thought it did, unquestionably.

Barry, I fear, did not devote much time to a consideration of the legality of his first client's claim; but his interest in the case was certainly profound. He came into the office on the day following Moses's visit, and exclaimed, triumphantly—

"I have been in to see Clymer, and to-morrow we shall have an opportunity of learning as much as we please about his business."

On the morrow, accordingly, Barry and I called upon our neighbour across the hall.

"Valk right into Villiam's office," said Moses, as we entered the room.

Barry, who seemed to have made himself thoroughly familiar with the place, led the way to one of the small compartments of which he had spoken, and I followed. There we found "Villiam," otherwise Mr. William Crampton, with his feet, encased in shabby gaiters, resting upon the ink-stained top of a pine table. He was a man of fifty or thereabouts, who might have been anything to

accord with the particular surroundings in which he was seen. With a white cravat and clothes of ecclesiastical cut, you would have set him down as a clergyman. In a checkered shirt, with a diamond sufficiently large and lustreless, you might have mistaken him for a bar-tender. In Moses Clymer's inner office he could be nothing but a critic.

Ten minutes' conversation revealed the fact that Mr. Crampton was a man of wide reading, undoubted culture, and superior critical taste. The same length of time served also to reveal the execrable quality of the tobacco which he used, and the astonishing quantity of beer. An earthen pitcher of this latter beverage was applied to his lips at intervals of four or five minutes, and the diminution of the contents during one of these draughts was something truly surprising. We stood the smoke manfully, however, and forgave the periodical interruptions occasioned by the beer. Mr. Crampton's conversation was worth these minor drawbacks.

"This business surprises you, no doubt," said he, laying down the pitcher tenderly.

"Well, yes, it does," rejoined Barry.

"Moses, here, has been engaged in it six or seven years. The old fellow must have made a snug little fortune during that time. He gets hold of his wares for almost nothing, and sells them always for a fair price. His profits last year amounted to more than three thousand dollars."

"You say that he sells his wares always for a fair price. Where does he find a market?" inquired I.

"With some of the magazines and newspapers. He

makes arrangements with the editors, who pay him so much a year, and get in return a given number of articles in prose and verse. He runs no risk. The periodicals take the chances as to the availability of the pieces they receive. Of course there must be proper discrimination used in deciding what articles we shall accept here ; but when that is done, Moses is sure of his profits."

"Then," said Barry, "the success or failure of Clymer rests altogether with you?"

"Well, Moses is certainly not a judge of literary work, and he leaves that to me. But I am not entitled to all the credit—not by any means. I occupy simply the position of a reader on a periodical publication—which, I may explain, was my calling before I became associated with Moses. After I had decided favourably upon an article, and the thirty days during which it is held subject to redemption have elapsed, then it is passed into the hands of Mr. Peters."

Here Crampton refreshed himself with another draught of the beer. He then continued :

"Mr. Peters is our polisher. By that I mean that he prepares the unredeemed pieces for the press. His duties are very much more laborious than are mine, and he is justly entitled to a goodly share of the credit. He takes a piece of verse, for example, rubs it down, so to speak, throws out or adds to it a stanza, props up a limping line, smooths out the rhythm, and corrects the faulty rhymes. That is what we call polishing. A prose article is put through a similar process, and sometimes even entirely re-written. The ideas, you see, are worth saving."

At this point Moses opened the door and laid a manu-

script upon the critic's table. The critic thereupon drew inspiration from the pitcher, and then proceeded to pass judgment on the verses. Barry and I watched him with undisguised interest.

"Our rhymsters nowadays," said he, "are little better than echoes. They give us musical lines, but their thoughts are all borrowed. Here, for instance, are some neatly constructed stanzas, but we find the ideas to be wonderfully familiar. Our author says :

' Now hope is dead and joy is fled,
Earth is barren, life is vain ;
For with anger toward my love
Worse than madness racks my brain.'

That would be better if we could forget the lines of Coleridge,

" And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.' "

"The author may have been unconscious of the plagiarism," suggested Barry.

"Very true," answered Crampton ; "but that unconsciousness proves his want of originality. His ideas are the outgrowth of his reading simply. He falls into the ruts which the wheels of other chariots have made. He finds it infinitely easier to pluck the fruit which has ripened in another's mind than to sow the seed of fresh thought, and nourish it to fructification. He drinks of twenty streams, and then gives us a flavour of them all. That flavour is sometimes excellent, but rarely new."

With this illustration, Mr. Crampton took another drink of the beer. Then, still scanning the pages of the manuscript, he continued :

"Here is another striking example of what I mean. The writer of these verses sings,

'When golden thoughts bring in their train
Sad thoughts which still are sweet.'

That is Wordsworth, and I cannot say that it is an improvement. The dead laureate puts it,

'In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.' "

"Have you pashed on dat piece of werse?" inquired Moses, thrusting his head through the door.

"It will do," answered Crampton.

"Vat shall I say about it dat is bad?"

"Too much of Coleridge and Wordsworth."

With this, Moses took the manuscript and withdrew.

"What amount will be advanced on that piece?" inquired Barry.

"I really couldn't tell," answered Crampton. "Moses takes charge of that, you see. You might step around behind the desk, and watch him while he makes the loan."

Barry and I were glad enough to act upon this suggestion. We found one of the consumptive-looking gentlemen, whose appearance had once led to the belief that Mr. Clymer was a physician, engaged in earnest conversation with the pawnbroker.

"Really, Moses, you ought to make that an even two dollars. Eight stanzas, you see. Rhythm smooth, and rhymes all perfect."

"One tollar and seeventy-feeve cents is all vat I can allows," rejoined Moses, decisively.

"But you advanced two dollars on those sonnets last week. These verses are much better than those"

"Dere vas too much of Cooleridge and Vadsvorth in em," rejoined Moses, disparagingly. "Dat is vat ails 'em—too much of Cooleridge and Vadsvorth. I will gives you one tollar and seeventy-feeve cents."

This offer was finally accepted, and Moses made out the ticket and paid over the money. Then he returned to us, saying,

"Ve cannot affords to pay too much on articles like dat. Dere is not demand enough, you see, and dere vas too much Cooleridge and Vadsvorth in 'em."

"Are any of these manuscripts ever redeemed?" asked Barry, when we had returned to Crampton's room.

"Yes, occasionally," replied the critic. "The writer can redeem them at any time within thirty days, and occasionally he avails himself of this privilege."

Crampton here availed himself of the privilege of moistening his lips at the mouth of the pitcher.

"The articles which are brought to Moses," he resumed, "without first having been submitted to an editor, constitute only a small part of what we receive. By far the larger proportion of the manuscripts are those that have been returned to the authors as unavailable. We take them, polish them, and sell them to less exacting publications."

"Mr. Clymer must feel his absolute dependence on you and Peters," suggested Barry.

"But he also makes us feel our dependence upon our own exertions," was the rejoinder. "We receive no salary for our work, but a given percentage on the articles which are published. If I decide favourably on a poem, and that poem is thrown out by the editor to whom

Moses carries it, then the sum which was originally advanced to the author is deducted from my percentage."

"In other words," said I, "Clymer is willing to share the profits but not the losses of his business."

"It amounts to about that, and yet Peters and I are well paid for our work. You see, we are able to select from a varied assortment, and to get the kind of matter which is suited to a particular publication. It rarely happens that we make a mistake."

"Or that you advance money on verses taken from a book," observed Barry, with a smile.

"The case which Moses has laid before you is the only one of that nature which ever occurred. Sometimes we have had stolen articles brought to us—all pawnbrokers' shops must expect that—but we have invariably detected the theft. The plagiarisms are usually glaringly apparent. Some months ago, I remember, a chap presented Byron's 'Maid of Athens,' and wanted two dollars on it."

Crampton was interrupted at this point by a thumping on the partition wall, while a voice from the adjoining compartment said,

"I want a two-syllabled word that is synonymous with 'endeavour.'"

"'Attempt,'" rejoined Crampton, after a moment's reflection. Then, addressing us, he added, "That is Peters. Suppose we step in and see him."

We found Mr. Peters hard at work polishing a poem. He was a younger man than his associate, with a prominent nose, which his biographer would probably call Roman, and with the hair and shirtfront of a genius. By way of illustrating the nature of his work, he read us

some verses, first as they had been received by Moses, and afterward as they came out of the polishing process. Before we left the room, I obtained permission to make a copy of these stanzas in both forms, which I have preserved up to the present time. While the lines possess little of poetic merit, I may nevertheless be pardoned for presenting them here as illustrative of Mr. Peters's manner of work.

In the original form they read as follows :

SHERRY WINE.

I will drink this amber-hued,
Ripe, and rare old sherry
To the maiden whom I loved—
Fair was she and merry—
Loved and wooed so long ago :
When it was I scarce may know.

I will drink to those old times
When to breathe was pleasure ;
When my heart, like sweetest rhyme,
Beat to Love's own measure ;
When the dreams of youth were mine,
Amber-hued, like this wine.

From the goblet I will drain
Time's forgotten flavour,
Taste those happy days again,
Sweetened by Love's own favour—
Days when through Loves magic hands.
Life ran all in golden sands.

What if love be at an end,
Life no longer merry,
Still I'll drink and drink again,
In this rare old sherry,
To the girl I loved and wooed
When the world was amber-hued !

Polished by Peters, the verses read thus :

A SONG.

I will drink this amber-hued,
Aromatic sherry
To the girl I loved and wooed—
Modest maiden merry—
Loved and wooed so long ago :
When it was I scarce may know,

I will drink to those old times
When to breathe was pleasure ;
When my pulse in rhythmic rhymes,
Beat to Love's own measure ;
When the dreams of youth were mine,
Amber-hued like sherry wine.

From the goblet I will drain
Time's forgotten flavour ;
Taste those golden days again,
Sweetened by Love's favour,
While I feel the draught divine
Warming all my blood like wine.

What if love be at an end,
Life no longer merry,
Here's a true and trusty friend,
Aromatic sherry ;
Truer than my love, I know,
Many, many years ago.

“ You will observe,” said Peters, when he had finished reading the verses, “ that there is substantially little change in the second copy of the poem. One or two imperfect rhymes are corrected—as, for example, ‘ times’ and ‘ rhyme’ in the second stanza—and some redundant syllables are dispensed with to preserve the metre.

In the main, however, the verses are alike. That couplet,

‘Days when through Love’s magic hands
Life ran all in golden sands,’

smacks a little too strongly of Tennyson to pass muster. I have, therefore, thrown it out, although I cannot say the substitution is an improvement.”

“Your work must be very laborious, Mr. Peters,” suggested Barry.

“It is what I may term ‘headachey,’” was the rejoinder. “Still, I get along tolerably well, and do not feel justified in swearing except when a parody on Poe’s ‘Raven’ turns up, or a new version of ‘The Bridge of Sighs.’”

Before Barry and I made an end of our visit, we passed around behind the counter, where Moses was engaged in assorting the numerous packages of manuscripts.

“On te top shelf, dere,” said he, “vas stories, nice stories, vich ve sells very sheap. You vas never seen nicer stories any vheres. On te next shelf vas wersedes—love wersedes. Dey vas really beautiful and sheap. On dis shelf here vas wersedes on ‘Spring’—and dey vas sheap too. Dose pelow vas all on deaths. You could not read one of dem vidout weeping, dey vas so beautiful and so sheap! Ven somebody in your family dies, dis is te place where you can find nice poetry vat vill comfort you. And it vill cost you only a leetle. Dat large package vas all pieces on te ‘Old Year.’ Dat one next to it vas on vine and other drinks. Dis package here vas made up of sonnets—ve

gives 'em away, almost. Every thing vat you sees vas nice and sheap ! ”

“ And not too much of Coleridge and Wordsworth in them ? ” said Barry, with a smile.

“ Oh my, no ! ” returned Moses, warmly. “ Dere vas no Cooleridge, no Vadsworth, in any of 'em. Peters he vas take all dat out.”

When at last we took leave of the pawnbroker, Barry announced that he would be prepared to express an opinion on the merits of Moses' case in the course of a week ; and Clymer again assured us that he would cheerfully pay the whole of the two dollars and fifty cents, if by so doing he could make an example of the impostor who had obtained a loan on verses taken from a book.

I regret to say that Barry did not keep his word. Mr. Clymer was left in doubt as to whether he possessed the right to institute legal proceedings against the p'agiarist. And not many weeks afterward we discovered that he had moved from the room across the hall to parts unknown. The firm of Barry and Bushnell may now be found in a more aristocratic neighbourhood than of old. Yet I never pass that dingy building on Nassau Street without wondering what has become of Moses Clymer. And I never turn to the poetry in a periodical without reflecting that perhaps these self-same stanzas have secured a loan of two dollars from Moses, have been favourably passed upon by Crampton, and have had the Coleridge and Wordsworth taken out of them by Peters.

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